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Appalachian Studies as an Academic and Activist Field, 1970-1982

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by

Emily Booker

May 2015

Dr. Marie Tedesco, chair

Dr. Ted Olson

Dr. Ron Roach

Keywords: Appalachian, region, regionalism, activism

ABSTRACT

Appalachian Studies as an Academic and Activist Field, 1970-1982

by

Emily Booker

This thesis examines the formation of Appalachian studies as an academic field from roughly 1970 to 1982. First, this thesis analyses regionalism and what defines a region, focusing on the different contexts and narratives through which Appalachia has been described. Second, this thesis examines how scholars and activists in the region challenged prevailing narratives and sought new ways to examine and contextualize the region. Efforts to challenge stereotypes and address the social, political, and economic problems of the region galvanized academics and activists alike. Despite their similar work and shared vision for an interdisciplinary regional field, academics and activists often disagreed on the methodologies and goals of Appalachian studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My family has lived in Appalachia since the eighteenth century. Growing up, I was very much aware of being *in* Appalachia, but I did not consider myself *of* Appalachia. As my father put it, “Appalachia was always farther out and further up the mountain.” In seeking to understand this elusive force that is Appalachia, I have been seeking to understand the place of my people and their connection to regional labels. I am thankful for the generations before me that planted deep roots in America’s most beautiful landscape so that I can find daily inspiration in looking at the familiar blue mountains.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the support and instruction of Dr. Marie Tedesco, Dr. Ted Olson, and Dr. Ron Roach throughout the process of this research. I am also grateful for the interviewees whose first-hand experiences and knowledge of the early years of Appalachian studies are invaluable. Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their continued love and support in all my endeavors. Their constant encouragement has enabled me to experience so many wonderful, beautiful adventures.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In 1981, the first national exhibition of art from Appalachia opened at the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. The Appalachian Regional Commission sponsored the exhibition titled “More Than Land or Sky.”¹ Sixty-nine contemporary artists from thirteen states presented their paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media projects. Pieces in the exhibit addressed subjects commonly associated with Appalachia: coal mining, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and rural life. However, many people, both in and out of the region, saw the exhibition as an exceptional opportunity for Appalachia to present itself to the nation. A review in the *Troublesome Creek Times* of Hindman, Kentucky, stated “A promoter of the exhibition observed that the large turnout...attests to a ‘real hunger’—Appalachians hungry for recognition, and others hungry to penetrate stereotypes of Appalachia and find out what the region is really like.”² In his *New York Times* review, Ben A. Franklin said, “The exhibition bestows rare recognition for people far removed from urbane centers of creative activity.”³

The opening of “More Than Land or Sky” was not the first cry for recognition of Appalachia. Advocates in the region had been working for years for wider recognition of Appalachia’s contributions to American art, music, literature, history, industry, and social movements, while also working to counter long-standing stereotypes about the region. But constructing and deconstructing narratives about a region requires critical analysis of place, history, and culture. A region such as Appalachia develops and evolves through a variety of political, economic, and social influences.

¹ Jim Wayne Miller, “‘Appalachian Literature and Music’—a permanent exhibition.” *Troublesome Creek Times*, January 13, 1982, box 1, folder 7, Appalachian Alliance Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN. [Hereafter cited as Archives of Appalachia, ETSU]

² Ibid.

³ Ben A. Franklin, “Museum Exhibits Appalachian Art.” *New York Times*, November 1, 1981, www.nytimes.com/1981/11/01/us/museum-exhibits-appalachian-art.html (Accessed February 8, 2015.)

In the early 1960s, President Kennedy met with governors from Appalachia to discuss the poverty and unemployment in the region. In 1963, he founded the President's Appalachian Regional Commission as a joint federal-state committee to work on development plans for the region. Under President Johnson, the research of the President's Appalachian Regional Commission led to the formation of the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1965.⁴ The commission brought more attention to the need to define Appalachia, both geographically and culturally, and to address the region's economic and social problems. As Robert Estall notes, the Appalachian Regional Commission differed from other regional commissions in that it involved the cooperation of federal, state, and local representation on a massive, multi-state development plan. In 1965, the area defined as Appalachia by the commission included ten percent of the American population.⁵ The theories and scholarship on Appalachia in the following decades were, in many ways, a response to the persistent narratives of Appalachia as an isolated region with a prevailing culture of poverty. Scholars addressed the relationship between region and nation, while at the same time sought new and broader definitions of Appalachia. The following two decades saw a shift in regional definition from a static, essentialist picture toward a fluid, pluralist one.

In the 1970s, several regional colleges and universities received both public and private grants allowing the formation of Appalachian studies centers and curricula. Appalachian studies programs developed by universities sought both to study the region academically, but also to create spaces for community education and involvement.⁶ The Appalachian Studies Conference,

⁴ Ronald D Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky. 2008): 77, 85.

⁵ Robert Estall, "Planning in Appalachia: An Examination of the Appalachian Regional Development Programme and Its Implications for the Future of the American Regional Planning Commissions." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 7, no. 1 (1982): 37, 38.

⁶ Ronald Eller, Interview by Emily Booker. Audio recording, Telephone, February 18, 2015.

which later became the Appalachian Studies Association, began in 1978 to provide a forum for presentation of research on Appalachia. Members wanted to share knowledge of the region across disciplinary lines and relate that knowledge to the needs and concerns of the community. The conference brought scholars, activists, and community representatives together to discuss the definition and direction of Appalachia.⁷ In many cases, the descriptions of Appalachia in the early years of the Appalachian Studies Conference fell back into traditional, static definitions that promote the region's residents as rural, white, and fatalistic. These descriptions also fell into the insider/outsider discourse of contrasting region to nation or criticizing external influence on the region. However, it is also possible to see criticisms of the traditional narratives as scholars asked what the creation of this new field meant, what direction was it headed in, and what should be the goals of such a field. Scholars strove to include a variety of disciplines in the study of Appalachia as well as minority groups that traditionally had been ignored in descriptions or studies of the region. Another key feature of early Appalachian studies was that scholars sought discourse with the communities they studied, seeking solutions to political, social, and economic problems. However, as Ronald Eller noted, many movements that begin with a focus on grassroots efforts and community action tend to shift toward a more structured, academic discipline as they grow, gain credibility, and find homes within institutions.⁸ This thesis will demonstrate that the field of Appalachian studies, as expressed through organizations such as the Appalachian Studies Association, developed as a multidisciplinary field that became increasingly academic as it gained recognition as an established discipline.

⁷ Logan Brown, Theresa Burchett-Anderson, Donovan Cain, and Jinny Turman Deal, with Howard Dorgan. "Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going? A History of the Appalachian Studies Association." *Appalachian Journal* 31, no. 1 (2003): 35.

⁸ Eller interview.

Chapter Two will examine the different ways in which a region and regionalism can be defined. Howard Odum's early work in regionalism defined regions as static parts, distinct from the whole, while current scholars promote a critical, evolving examination of region. The combination of geography, history, politics, and culture mold regional identity. The narratives and presumptions applied to a space construct a region.⁹ This idea is explored through Douglas Reichert Powell's discussion of regional creation in *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* and Henry Shapiro's *Appalachia on Our Mind*.

The chapter also will examine how these constructs of region and regional identity have applied historically to Appalachia. Numerous scholars have described Appalachia in various ways. Reshaped and redefined, Appalachia has developed from the mountainous section of the antebellum South to its own distinct region. It has meant "a strange land and a peculiar people"¹⁰ in the nineteenth century, the face of rural, white poverty in need of national intervention in the mid-twentieth century, and the nostalgic, celebratory place of folk culture and rural life for activists concerned by modernization, industrialization, and corporate globalism. This changing perception of Appalachia set the tone for the field that arose in the 1970s to study, define, and advocate for Appalachia from within the region.

Chapter Three will examine the political and social concerns addressed by activists within Appalachian studies in the 1970s. As a consequence of the strong influence of the coal mining industry in central Appalachia, many activists were concerned about land ownership, labor safety, and health, and how they affected the politics and economy of the region.

Organizations such as the Highlander Research and Education Center and the Appalachian

⁹ Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

¹⁰ Will Wallace Harney, "A Strange Land and a Peculiar People," in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, edited by W. K. McNeil (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 45.

Alliance worked on raising community awareness of political and economic problems and supporting community action groups.¹¹ College and university Appalachian studies programs led community education lectures and forums on these topics. They also worked to bring more awareness to the diversity within the region, including the Cherokee, blacks, and women. The University of North Carolina in Asheville added urban-focused material to its archives to include urban centers of the region into the Appalachian narrative.¹² Students of Appalachian studies participated in local activist efforts, addressing health, education, and land ownership. Community involvement was a central core to the interdisciplinary nature of Appalachian studies.

Chapter Four will examine the formation of institutions and organizations dedicated to Appalachian studies. Developed as an interdisciplinary field, early Appalachian studies relied heavily on scholars from the fields of English and sociology. Cratis Williams' work at Appalachian State University spawned the programs and curricula of Appalachian studies in the mid-twentieth century. His background was in English and his dissertation "The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction" analyzed earlier descriptions of the region.¹³ The earliest courses on Appalachia focused on literature, history, and folk culture. However, when programs for Appalachian studies developed, there were efforts to incorporate fields such as biology, education, and political science. Some institutions, such as the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky, formed in order for universities to conduct research on the region and to

¹¹ J. W. Williamson and Edwin T. Arnold, ed. "Myles Horton Interviewed by Bill Moyers" (1981) in *Interviewing Appalachia: The Appalachian Journal Interviews, 1978-1992*, ed. by J. W. Williamson and Edwin T. Arnold (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 28.

¹² Appalachian Consortium. "Southern Highlands Research Center." *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (April 1978) Series 1, box 9, folder 5. Arthur DeRosier Papers, University Archives, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN. [Hereafter cited as University Archives, ETSU.]

¹³ Louie Brown, Introduction to *An Appalachian Symposium*, edited by J. W. Williamson, (Boone, NC: The Appalachian Journal, 1977), v.

promote community action.¹⁴ Other institutions, such as the Appalachian Studies Conference or the Appalachian Consortium, consisted of several different colleges and universities and promoted the sharing of resources and research across the region. These institutions also included community action groups as members, blending academic, activist, and public viewpoints into the discussion of Appalachia.¹⁵ This chapter explores the histories of these institutions and the various viewpoints represented by them. It will show the points of consistency in regional definition as well as the variances. Through their formations and early programs, one can examine the range of topics being studied at the time, such as ballads, Cherokee culture, health, land ownership, and regional history. Journals such as the *Appalachian Journal* and the *Proceedings of the Appalachian Studies Conference*, now the *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, show how scholars at the time addressed regional topics and how those topics shaped the regional narrative.

Chapter Five will address the academic Appalachian studies programs established by universities in the region. Scholars, such as Cratis Williams and Stephen Fisher believed that universities and colleges much adopt a regional identity to better engage students from the region and to interact with the surrounding community. Universities took different approaches to establishing Appalachian studies curricula on their campuses. Several schools hosted lecture series on Appalachia open to the general public and developed lesson plans and bibliographies for middle-school and high-school instruction. By examining these programs, the courses, and the readings, one can form an idea of how these universities positioned themselves as regional universities and which topics and goals they prioritized.

¹⁴ Eller interview.

¹⁵ Herbert W. Wey. "Cratis Williams and App Studies at ASU" (April 7, 1976) Pat Beaver Papers, box 15, folder 2, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Belk Library, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC: 3. [Hereafter cited as W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.]

As documenters and researchers of the region, the scholars involved in Appalachian studies institutions are in the position to define and direct the discourse on regional identity in Appalachia. What they study and how they synthesize these topics into a critical examination of the region determined the development and progression of solutions for the region. The beginnings and early developments of Appalachian studies as a field reflected the academic models and political discourse of the time, but also shaped the definition and direction of regional identity in Appalachia for the next several decades.

CHAPTER 2 DEFINING A REGION

What Makes a Region?

When discussing regional studies, it is critical to understand the very concept of region. Generally, regions are areas separated from a larger whole, such as a nation, and are defined by geographical, historical, and cultural characteristics. The definition of a region greatly affects the direction of that area's cultural, political, and economic development. It will affect the discourse on key issues such as education, health care, land use, and welfare. Some scholars, such as Henry Shapiro, saw regions as constructs designed to serve larger political and cultural needs. For example, in *Appalachia on Our Mind*, Shapiro said that outsiders constructed the idea of Appalachia as a region to serve their external narrative. Missionaries and benevolence workers from the North came to Appalachia in the early twentieth century to solve the problems of poverty and poor education. He argues that Appalachia was never a coherent region with a homogeneous culture, but that was the narrative created by outsiders. Benevolence workers described the region as a culture of isolation, poverty, and Anglo-Saxon heritage in order to justify their continued work in the region.¹ Ideas of Appalachian identity and otherness changed over time to accommodate the political and social needs of the nation. The definition of a region will adapt as the needs change.² Because regions are constructed by different organizations, professionals, scholars, and activists for different purposes, regional study must also analyze these purposes and differing definitions to form a clearer concept of a region's identity.

Although constructed, region is still rooted in very real places. Persons tend to develop a relationship with the geographic and cultural landscape around them, particularly in childhood.

¹ Shapiro, 119.

² Herbert G. Reid, "Appalachia and the 'Sacrament of Co-existence': Beyond Post-colonial Trauma and Regional Identity Traps," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 11, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2005): 171.

This landscape becomes part of one's identity. In *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945*, Robert L. Dorman mentions nineteenth-century philosopher and surveyor J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur who said that culture and nation are external forces acting on the individual. Regional culture happens to, and thus shapes, individual identity.³ Therefore, the definition of region is important in contributing to the establishment of a person's identity. It solidifies or gives context to his or her place in the world.

According to sociologist Howard Odum, regionalism develops out of the practical need to study areas for historical, social, and planning purposes. Although distinct, a region is still an interactive part of a nation. Region can be a tool in studying a larger, more complex whole. This definition of region downplays conflict or diversity in the region. The region is easy to generalize and classify. Researchers apply regional identity to a region for practical purposes.⁴ In *American Regionalism: A Cultural Historical Approach to National Integration*, Odum and Harry Estill addressed components of regionalism. As parts of a larger whole, regions represent aspects of a place or a group that makes it unique from another. Odum and Estill said, "The regionalist sees the region as a unit, a microcosm of society, a set of factors combining to form a regional pattern; and believes that these elements can be understood only when conceived as a part of the whole."⁵ Thus, regionalism is a way of studying the way these regional patterns stand out from the cohesive, larger whole. At the same time, regionalism is a way of understanding the relationship of the region with the nation and studying how the region represents behaviors, attitudes, and values of the larger whole. According to Odum, as microcosms, regions can be

³ Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 5.

⁴ Howard W. Odum. "From Community Studies to Regionalism." *Social Forces* 23, no. 3 (March 1945): 253.

⁵ Odum and Harry Estill Moore, *American Regionalism: A Cultural Historical Approach to National Integration*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), 16.

testing grounds for theories and experiments.⁶ The region is distinct from the nation, yet it serves the nation. Variants of this idea appeared in later theories that questioned the relationship between nation and region and the ways in which the region serves or is exploited by the nation. For example, the internal colonialism model studied Appalachia as a resource colony to the rest of America.⁷ By discussing the relationship between region and nation, one can understand the influence of external trends in the region. External communication and influence means the region is not truly an isolated part of a whole. What defines a region has developed away from static, isolated classifications. Instead, regions are understood as an ever-changing place of plural subcultures, external influence, and a fluid evolution of a region's identity.

Perhaps the most fundamental definition of a region is a spatial one that begins with the landscape in which people live. Geographers define a region by the geographic landscape. Mountains, rivers, and coastlines create natural borders. For example, Appalachia more or less follows the Appalachian mountain range. Yet the people and culture found within the region's boundaries also affect the region's definition. Kephart's *Our Southern Highlanders* chronicles his trip through the Great Smoky Mountains and his interactions with the local people.⁸ Kephart's mountaineer became the face of the mountain region because regional definitions include the peoples living within a geographic boundary. In *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape*, Douglas Reichert Powell analyzes the influence of place and history in developing region. Powell notes that regions are constructed when a voice of authority attributes defining characteristics to a geographic area. Places have distinguishable qualities that make the creation of regions possible, yet it is the cultural narratives and practical

⁶ Odum, 252.

⁷ See: Helen Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins, editors. *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*. (Boone, NC: The Appalachian Consortium, 1978).

⁸ Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders*. (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1913): 13.

necessities that lead to the construct of regions.⁹ For example, Appalachia, as mapped by the Appalachian Regional Commission, includes counties across thirteen states, providing a governmental, and arguably, “official” definition of the region. This designation comes from political and economic definitions more than from geographic or cultural ones because the focus of the organization is economic development.

Often, it is not only the history, behaviors, and values of a people, but also the perceptions and narratives applied to those people, that identify a regional culture. Geography and space, while the most basic elements in creating a region, only serve as a foundation. Political, social, and cultural meanings also define the region. The boundaries of a region fluctuate with new narratives, new histories, and new scholarship. In regional study, one must engage the notion of multiple boundaries, contesting definitions, and questions of who constructed certain narratives and why. Critical regionalism accounts for boundary fluidity and includes the various exchanges and influences at play, allowing for a more complex, evolving definition of a region. Communications outside the region, global trends, and voices of multiple subcultures all contribute to a critical regionalist study. A critical study expands the idea of a region to encompass broader understandings of its history, culture, and social issues. Although primarily a pedagogy for understanding the dynamics of a region, critical regionalism can be used by activists pushing to change a community or by members of subcultures seeking a voice within a community. It is through critical regionalism that regions are academically constructed, critiqued, and deconstructed.¹⁰

The construct and study of regional becomes particularly important when a field of study develops around the region, as is the case with Appalachian studies. In regional studies fields, the

⁹ Powell, *Critical Regionalism*, 46.

¹⁰ Ibid., 8; Chad Berry, Interview by Emily Booker. Audio recording, Telephone, March 3, 2015.

region must be studied through multiple lenses to incorporate the region's landscape, history, culture, and economic system. Further, regional studies must include understanding of the larger global picture of which the region is a part. In "Appalachia as a Global Region: Toward Critical Regionalism and Civic Professionalism," Herbert Reid and Betsy Taylor address the need for regional study to include global study. They note that social, political, and cultural conflicts of the global scale must be conceptualized and discussed in regional discourse because the region is not isolated from the effects of globalization.¹¹ Regional studies are capable of making an interdisciplinary, critical analysis of a region that can lead to further academic study, as well as to community-based activism.

Where and What is Appalachia?

Its mountainous areas and natural resources, such as coal, mark Appalachia's distinctive features. However, Appalachia developed primarily as a cultural region, set apart from the rest of the country. In their essay "Cognitive Maps of Appalachia," Karl B. Raitz and Richard Ulack note that how people define a region greatly depends on their personal identification with, proximity to, and understanding of the region. These cognitive maps combine a person's preferences, values, and perception of place with geographical and political boundaries in creating a broad regional map.¹² Raitz and Ulack surveyed students from inside and outside Appalachia, asking them to draw a map of the location of Appalachia. They concluded that although respondents generally followed the mountain range in drawing their boundaries, they shifted the center of the region closer to their own homes.¹³ For example, Kentucky respondents put the center of Appalachia along the Kentucky-Virginia line, touching Tennessee and West

¹¹ Herbert Reid and Betsy Taylor, "Appalachia as a Global Region: Toward Critical Regionalism and Civic Professionalism," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 10.

¹² Karl B. Raitz and Richard Ulack. "Cognitive Maps of Appalachia," *Geographical Review* 71, no. 2 (April 1981): 202, accessed February 5, 2015, www.jstor.org/stable/214188.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 203, 204, 206.

Virginia; Ohio respondents put the center of Appalachia just south of the Ohio-West Virginia line. New York respondents were the only ones to include New York within the Appalachian boundary, despite New York being included in the Appalachian Regional Commission definition of the region. For the most part, however, Northern Appalachia traditionally has been ignored in descriptions of Appalachia, despite the area's federal recognition as part of the region. It shares characteristics similar to Central and Southern Appalachia, such as its English and German early settlers, its history of farming and mining, and its distressed economic condition. Yet residents in Northern Appalachia did not identify with the narrative of Appalachia that was based in the Central and Southern part of the region.¹⁴ Raitz and Ulack's work shows the fluidity of a regional boundary. It also shows the influence of personal observations and cultural narratives in defining a region, despite geographical or political maps.

A distinct region called Appalachia, separate from the South, did not emerge until the late nineteenth century. The Southern mountains or Southern Highlands, as Horace Kephart called the region, were a sub-region of the South, itself a region within the United States. As Wilma Dykeman notes in "Appalachia in Context," "There was no 'Appalachia' in the antebellum conscious."¹⁵ The mountains differed from other parts of the South. For example, the South relied to a great extent on plantation farming and the cotton industry. However, Appalachian farming consisted mostly of small farms organized around a mix of livestock, corn, grain, and vegetables. The mountainous terrain made large-scale crops difficult to produce. Livestock raised in Southern and Central Appalachia, such as pigs and sheep, were often sold in the

¹⁴ Deanna L. Tribe, *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Identity, Northern Appalachia." Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006.

¹⁵ Wilma Dykeman, "Appalachia in Context," in *An Appalachian Symposium*, edited by J. W. Williamson (Boone, NC: The Appalachian Journal, 1977), 30.

South.¹⁶ Also, there was a large orchard economy in the mountains, which sold fresh and dried fruits to the South as well as apple cider and peach brandy.¹⁷ The mountain economy remained closely tied to the rest of the South, and before the Civil War, was considered part of the same region.

During the Civil War, the Southern Mountain Region had representatives on both sides, contributing volunteers and resources to both the Union and Confederacy. The high levels of Union support led to the separation of West Virginia from Virginia and discussions of separation in East Tennessee.¹⁸ In East Tennessee, a largely unionist population, with an influential secessionist portion, created tensions throughout the Civil War. Robert Tracy McKenzie says in *One South or Many?* that Confederate veterans in Greene County were often run out of their homes once returning from the war.¹⁹ Appalachia was too southern for the North but too unionist for the Confederacy. Following the war, the South came to refer to the old Confederacy, the cotton plantations, and wealthy whites disenfranchised by Reconstruction. The Southern mountains were cut out of this regional definition as they were not part of this antebellum memory. Appalachia, with its different economy, different politics, and different history, did not fit into the plantation narrative of the South.²⁰ Dykeman says, “The Civil War not only divided America. It divided Appalachia from the South. But because Appalachia’s geographic location was still Southern, it was judged, rejected, isolated by the very region of which it was, in one sense, both warm heart and gritty gizzard.”²¹ Appalachia became divided from the South because

¹⁶ Mary Beth Pudur, “The Limits of Subsistence: Agriculture and Industry in Central Appalachia,” *Agricultural History* 64, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 67, 68, accessed March 8, 2015, www.jstor.org/stable/3743183.

¹⁷ Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996): 140.

¹⁸ Dykeman, 30.

¹⁹ Robert Tracy McKenzie, *One South or Many? Plantation Belt and Upcountry in Civil War-Era Tennessee*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 105.

²⁰ Dykeman, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

it did not have the same economic system, built up by large plantations and devastated in the war, and because it did not have the same overwhelming Confederate loyalties as the South. Furthermore, Appalachia did not fit into the South's new narrative. During Reconstruction, both the North and South promoted the idea that the antebellum South was a region of wealthy whites living leisurely on large plantations. To the North, this idea proved that the South needed Reconstruction efforts to move away from a culture that relied on slavery. To the South, this idea proved that the region was better off before the Civil War and that Reconstruction was destroying Southern culture.²² For southerners who remembered the antebellum South as the region's Golden Age, the values and virtues of the region rested in the plantation life.²³ Appalachia, left out of this new, nostalgic definition of the South was abandoned by its own region, only to be quickly "discovered" and redefined.

Some of the earliest depictions of Appalachia as a separate region come from local color writers in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Tourism of the region was not new. Since 1850, the Southern Mountains attracted tourists from the South, the Northeast and abroad. During the Civil War, tourism to the region diminished. It resumed after the war. In particular, northerners wanting an escape from the booming populations of Northeast cities visited the mountains for the fresh air and natural beauty.²⁴ In the nineteenth century, the Southern Mountains had 134 mineral spas and hot spring resorts and were a popular destination for relaxation and recreation.²⁵ Local color writers travelled to the region to write about the rural adventures beyond the resorts. Their essays were published in popular magazines such as *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and

²² Paul M. Gaston, "The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking," In *Myth and Southern History: The New South*, edited by Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 52, 53.

²³ Ibid., 54.

²⁴ Kevin E. O'Donnell and Helen Hollingsworth, editors, *Seekers & Scenery: Travel Writing from Southern Appalachia 1840-1900* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004): 20.

²⁵ Dunaway, 1.

Cosmopolitan, giving the region national attention. Writers of this period describe the region as different and dangerous, the perfect background for a domestic adventure. Tales of feuding and moonshining create an image of lawlessness. As Kevin E. O'Donnell and Helen Hollingsworth state in *Seekers & Scenery: Travel Writing from Southern Appalachia 1840-1900*, the descriptions of Appalachia from these local color writers come from visitors to the region and lack any native representation. The essays come from visitors viewing Appalachia as a foreign land, and, they note, "to southerners, the region appears just as alien as it does to the northern writers."²⁶ Even through the twentieth century, academics and activists in the region attempted to counter the trend of outsiders defining Appalachia.

Our Southern Highlanders comes at the end of the local color era. Kephart's descriptions focus on the isolation and lawlessness but also the hard-working nature and hospitality of the people. At one point, he says, "The mountain code of conduct is a curious mixture of savagery and civility."²⁷ This book encompassed the fundamental literary description of Appalachia for the next several decades. Such descriptions of Appalachia tell readers just as much about the values of the travel writers as they do about the people of the mountains. Stories extolling the isolated mountain clans skirting the law by fighting or in their attempt to make moonshine reflect common American values of individualism and hard work. The mountains merely served as a setting for American stories.²⁸

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the uniqueness of the mountains no longer proved mildly quaint. Rather, writers and social workers saw the "backwardsness" and lawlessness as a social problem. In "The Southern Mountaineer," John Fox, Jr. in 1901 described the mountaineers as relics of American colonial days. However, he notes the mountain people's

²⁶ O'Donnell and Hollingsworth, 27.

²⁷ Kephart, 193.

²⁸ Allen W. Batteau. *The Invention of Appalachia*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990): 18.

violence, not isolation, as what makes them most different from other Americans. He says that a feud represents “ignorance, shiftlessness, incredible lawlessness, a frightful estimate of the value of human life.”²⁹ In “Romance and Tragedy of Kentucky Feuds,” Josiah Stoddard Johnson states that such violence and disregard for the law is a product of the harsh, isolating environment of the mountains. His solution to such isolation and violence was industrial expansion into the region.³⁰

In 1899, William Goodell Frost, president of Berea College from 1892-1920, described Appalachia as a place completely opposite from the rest of America. Isolation from modernity had created a culture of poor, illiterate Anglo-Saxons stuck in a “pioneer stage of development.”³¹ He paints a picture of people in great need and calls for the intervention of outsiders to support and educate the mountain people into mainstream American life.³² There were efforts to educate and modernize the Southern mountaineers and incorporate the region into mainstream America. Henry Shapiro credited Frost with the “invention of Appalachia.”³³ For it is his description and call for action that sets the tone for narratives and counter-narratives of finding “solutions” to the problems within Southern mountain culture in the twentieth century. As Allen Batteau notes in his book *The Invention of Appalachia*, defining the region came from political motivations.³⁴ “Othering” the region justified intervention to missionaries, social workers, and industrialists.

In the 1920s and 1930s, this rural alternative to modernity and industrialization drew admirable attention from people who wanted to focus on the romanticized aspects of rural life:

²⁹ John Fox, Jr., “The Southern Mountaineer,” in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, edited by W. K. McNeil (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 124, 137.

³⁰ Josiah Stoddard Johnson. “Romance and Tragedy of Kentucky Feuds,” *Ibid.*, 108, 111.

³¹ William Goodell Frost, “Our Contemporary Ancestors,” *Ibid.*, 98.

³² *Ibid.*, 99.

³³ Shapiro, 119.

³⁴ Batteau, 33.

fresh air, connection with the land, and folk culture. This interest in folk and regionalism in the inter-war period provided the nation with a comfort of a tradition and culture set apart from the isolating and violent modernity of World War I and the Great Depression.³⁵ Odum saw folk culture as the definitive culture for regionalist study.³⁶ Folk played a large role in Odum's study of the South. His study of folklore, speech, and music of blacks in the South led him to theorize on the basis of cultural traits. He developed the concept of a folk-region as a way of measuring and studying group behavior. It both demonstrated the differences between regions in the nation and differences within regions.³⁷ Odum applied this theory of folk-region to his research in the South, publishing *Southern Regions of the United States* in 1936. He hoped that an understanding of folk and region would improve social planning, as policies and strategies could progress differently according to the region. However, Odum never separated Appalachia as a separate region from the South. In fact, he did not include Appalachia as a division in *Southern Regions of the United States*.³⁸ Nonetheless, early studies of Appalachia as a region focused on its distinct folk culture: crafts, ballads, and stories. Appalachian folk could represent a homogeneous American folk culture, one that did not include urban centers, ethnic minorities, or concerns over systematic social issues. Jane Becker says in *Selling Tradition* that the concept of a folk culture is the idea of a separation from industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. She says, "Tradition and folk...are ideologically constructed categories shaped by social, gender, and racial relations and by political and economic considerations."³⁹ Just as tourists travelled to the Southern Mountains to physically escape from the modern, crowded cities, they purchased folk

³⁵ Dorman, 24.

³⁶ Odum, 245.

³⁷ Harvey A. Kantor. "The Implications of Folk, Planning, and Regionalism," *American Journal of Sociology* 79, 2 (1973): 281, 285. Accessed March 14, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2776459>.

³⁸ David S. Walls, "On the Naming of Appalachia," in *An Appalachian Symposium*, edited by J. W. Williamson (Boone, NC: The Appalachian Journal, 1977), 69.

³⁹ Jane Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 2.

items to ideologically escape modern industrialization. The celebration of folk led to the creation of craft schools in the region and attracted a number of scholars seeking to collect ballads, tunes, stories, and handicraft skills from people in Appalachia.

The 1960 presidential campaign brought national attention to the significant poverty, unemployment, and health concerns in central Appalachia. Senator John Kennedy promised relief programs and federal aid for West Virginia in his campaign. Senator Hubert Humphrey called poverty in America “a national scandal.”⁴⁰ Unemployment rates in central Appalachia were twice the national average. In 1960, one in three families in Appalachia lived below the poverty level.⁴¹ Appalachia became the face of white, rural poverty. Sociologists, economists, and politicians applied various models to Appalachia in attempts to explain why the region was so afflicted. The three main models were the culture of poverty, regional development, and internal colonialism.⁴² The culture of poverty model, developed by anthropologist Oscar Lewis, states that some people in poverty have few long-term aspirations and have stopped participating in the greater society.⁴³ The culture of poverty inherently values behaviors that contribute to poverty, such as a low prioritization of education or fatalistic religion. The culture of poverty model as applied to Appalachia fit with the narrative that Appalachian people were different from other Americans; they were fatalists, violent, and lazy due to their Scots-Irish roots. In his book *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, Harry Caudill cites this Scot-Irish heritage as the cause of continued poverty in the region. Being fatalistic led to them accepting whatever conditions they found themselves in and not working toward improvements or advancement. Being violent

⁴⁰ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 54.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 30, 31.

⁴² David S. Walls and Dwight B. Billings, “The Sociology of Southern Appalachia.” *Appalachian Journal* 5, no. 1 (1977): 132.

⁴³ David B. Miller, “A Partial Test of Oscar Lewis’ Culture of Poverty in Rural America” *Current Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (1976): 720, accessed March 10, 2015. www.jstor.org/stable/214188.

made them hostile to the law and to outsiders trying to help. Being lazy made them unwilling to work hard. Caudill also claims that Appalachian people lack the American value of pursuit of freedom, which made them complacent in regard to exploitation by industrialists.⁴⁴ *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* gained great popularity nationally and his application of the culture of poverty in Appalachia corresponded well with existing culture of poverty narratives throughout the nation. The book, in part, brought national attention to the poverty of Appalachia. Although it uses many of the old stereotypes of Appalachians as isolated, backwards, and lazy, the book inspired many activists to address the region's problems. Eller said that when he first read *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* in college, he recognized the people Caudill was writing about, and he wanted to further explore the history of the region and Caudill's idea of Appalachia being a resource colony of the nation.⁴⁵

The economic development model, often used in combination with the culture of poverty model, asserted that planned urban centers and more production would lift communities out of poverty. Using a combination of the culture of poverty and economic development models, the federal government developed programs to address poverty throughout the country. As noted earlier, in 1961, President Kennedy first met with the Conference of Appalachian Governors to discuss ways to stimulate economic development in the region, as growth of urban centers in Appalachia was slower than in other parts of the country.⁴⁶ This meeting led to the formation of the President's Appalachian Regional Commission in 1963 and, eventually, the formation of the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1965. Critics of the ARC were concerned with the focus on economic development and urbanization. The ARC concentrated investment in the growth of

⁴⁴ Harry Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* (Ashland, KY: Jesse Stuart Foundation, 2001), 10.

⁴⁵ Eller interview.

⁴⁶ Estall, 39.

development districts, not the most rural counties. Estall states that by 1971, one-third of commission funds had gone to only 60 of the region's 397 counties.⁴⁷

By 1965, President Johnson's Great Society programs were going into effect. His vision of a Great Society included the end of racial discrimination and injustice as well as the elimination of poverty. Modeling his program after the New Deal of the 1930s, Johnson pushed several bills through Congress. The War on Poverty, a series of congressional acts passed in 1964 and 1965 targeting poverty, initiated several federal programs to aid families. These programs focused on education, health, and welfare reform. The Economic Opportunity Act expanded adult education and training. The Food Stamp Act gave federal assistance to families to buy food. The War on Poverty also expanded Social Security, establishing Medicare and Medicaid.⁴⁸ In the similar spirit of addressing poverty, the Appalachian Regional Commission was founded to promote economic development and industrialization in Appalachia. The commission focused on wide economic development to the region and worked with local representatives on joint development plans.⁴⁹

Another model for exploring regional poverty was the internal colonialism model. Developed in the late-1960s, this model states that it is not the culture or amount of development within a region that creates poverty but the structural, economical, and political dominance of a larger or stronger region.⁵⁰ Solutions to poverty cannot come from the same sources that create exploitation and must instead come from the exploited community. In the case of Appalachia,

⁴⁷ Estall, 48.

⁴⁸ Annelise Orleck. "Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up" In *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011): 3, accessed on March 14, 2015. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46np4b.3.

⁴⁹ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 78.

⁵⁰ Helen M. Lewis and Edward E. Knipe, "The Colonialism Model: The Appalachian Case." In *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, edited by Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone, NC: The Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 14.

external owners of industry have exploited the region, taking its resources outside of the region and creating a system of poverty. Furthermore, the federal government has been complacent in this exploitation, pushing for large economic development while being slow to act on issues of industry health or environmental impact. Intervention from the outside is suspect from within the colony. Solutions are best when they develop from the community.

Helen Lewis was one of the strongest proponents of the internal colonialism model. Lewis worked both as a scholar and activist, teaching at Clinch Valley College, East Tennessee State University, and the Highlander Research and Education Center. Lewis first moved to Wise, Virginia, when her husband got a job at Clinch Valley College. While working part-time on campus, she and Ed Knipe secured a Bureau of Mines grant to research coal communities. Researching coal communities and the ownership of coal companies, Lewis and Knipe saw parallels between the colonialism of Third World countries and the coal industry in Central Appalachia. However, Clinch Valley College would not offer her a fulltime position, so in 1967 Lewis took a position at East Tennessee State University in the sociology department.⁵¹ Knipe took a position there as well so they could continue their Bureau of Mines research. As Lewis notes in *Living Social Justice in Appalachia*, many college students in the late 1960s were passionate about activist topics such as civil rights, feminism, and the antiwar movement. Over the next couple of years, the sociology department grew as students wanted to better understand society and culture. In 1969, the university fired Lewis and Knipe for “nurturing radical students,” although Lewis disputes the claims that she told students to burn their draft cards.⁵² They went back to Clinch Valley College, where Lewis developed a rural social work program, which included a seminar titled “Appalachian Seminar.” In a response defending the decision to

⁵¹ Helen M. Lewis, *Living Social Justice in Appalachia*, edited by Patricia D. Beaver and Judith Jennings. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 59.

⁵² Ibid.

include a seminar on the culture of Appalachia in a social work program, Lewis wrote, “There are deep and serious problems in Appalachia due to outside ownership of resources and a century of exploitation of the area’s resources (land and people). This exploitation has left the area and its people poor and powerless, and social institutions, including the schools, have tended to preserve the status quo or ignore the situation.”⁵³ For Lewis, understanding Appalachia involved an understanding of the region’s resources and ownership.

The internal colonialism model drew attention to industrial and environmental issues such as poverty, health, and education. Supporters of the model were also critical of federal programs, such as the War on Poverty and the Appalachian Regional Commission, as being further external intervention. Caudill also criticized the effectiveness of federal programs, although his reasons were a mix of the older culture of poverty model and the internal colonialism model. According to him, Central Appalachia struggled with poverty because of exploitation of industry owners and the complicity of the people, which was inherent to their culture. He noted that externally-created programs will be ineffective until there is cultural change within the region.⁵⁴

However, all three models, culture of poverty, development, and internal colonialism, according to David S. Walls and Dwight B. Billings in “The Sociology of Southern Appalachia,” were “first developed in the context of underdevelopment in the Third World and applied by analogy to the Appalachian case.”⁵⁵ Some scholars and activists saw parallels between the absentee ownership of land and industry of Appalachia and Third World countries. For example, writer Wilma Dykeman said, “The Appalachian experience of being poor in money, rural,

⁵³ Helen M. Lewis “Appalachian Studies—The Next Step.” *Appalachian Journal* 9, no. 2/3 (Winter/Spring 1982), 162.

⁵⁴ Caudill, 49.

⁵⁵ Walls and Billings, 132.

exploited, and patronized is less part of the American experience than it is that of many ‘foreign’ countries.”⁵⁶ Yet, Appalachia is not a foreign country but a region within the United States.

Walls and Billings stress that perceived parallels do not make a model about colonized countries apply to a region within a First World country. The politics, economics, and cultural factors of colonization do not apply in the same way. However, the internal colonialism model gained interest in the 1970s from critics of the Appalachian Regional Commission and from community activists concerned about land ownership and community organization within the region. The focus on Appalachia as a land of poverty and frustration with the federal programs addressing poverty also generated regional scholarship and activism in Appalachia. Activists and scholars sought to identify the region in terms apart from a culture of poverty and questioned what kinds of organizations and programs were best suited to address regional issues.⁵⁷

It is easy for regional study to limit itself. While dispelling stereotypes, regional scholars can fall into the same trap of focusing on regional otherness and isolation. Celebration of culture might counter the negative stereotypes, but it can still reinforce static, homogenous images of a place, thus continuing to ignore the diversity and fluidity to the region. Even as Appalachian studies scholars of the 1970s countered the culture of poverty descriptions of Appalachia from the 1960s, there continued to be a rigid insider/outsider discourse. Shapiro’s ideas about Appalachia as invention focuses on outsiders constructing Appalachia to serve national needs, be it the antidote to modernity during the 1920s folk movement or the face of rural poverty during the War on Poverty. Proponents of the internal colonialism model focused on exploitation of the region. Proponents of folk movements sought “authentic” traditions, free from outside influence. However, for an insider/outsider discourse to work, it must first create a definitive line between

⁵⁶ Dykeman, 40.

⁵⁷ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 61.

what is considered inside or outside. This can lead back to rigid, static definitions of region that ignore the intricacy of a region. Herbert Reid offers two reasons to be wary of the insider/outsider discourse. First, it ignores the complexity of how globalization and transnationalism affects regions. It also prevents localized political action efforts from mobilizing in a global way, helping the local elites keep activist organization efforts small and disconnected.⁵⁸ Richard Blaustein, a scholar of bluegrass and mountain music, worried that Appalachian studies would become an elitist field of academics who would set criteria for who is considered an insider or outsider to Appalachia and dismiss newcomers in regional discussions.⁵⁹

Despite questions as to whether Appalachia actually exists or whether it is nothing more than a construct, the existence of a field of Appalachian studies suggest that there continues to be an assertion by scholars and activists that Appalachia exists, even if its definition is fluid. There are some who hold to an Appalachian identity and dedicate themselves to the study and advocacy of the region, so even if Appalachia is only a cognitive construction, it is a real influence in the regional identity of many. Whether it is the geography, the resource, the history, or the cultural traditions, there is an identity to Appalachia that makes it a region. As Richard B. Drake says in his essay “The Struggle in Appalachian Studies, 1950-1981,” “Though the boundaries of an Appalachian identity have never been precise...the reality of the heart of Appalachia has seldom been in doubt. Our uniqueness is real.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Reid, 169.

⁵⁹ Richard Blaustein, “Traveling with Clint Howard: The Role of Outsiders in Appalachian Studies,” *Appalachian Journal* 9, no. 2/3 (Winter/Spring 1982), 186.

⁶⁰ Richard B. Drake, “The Struggle in Appalachian Studies, 1950-1981,” *Appalachian Journal* 9, no. 2/3 (Winter/Spring 1982), 193.

CHAPTER 3

APPALACHIAN STUDIES AS SOCIAL REACTION

Activist and scholar Stephen Fisher said, “My experience has been that people often come to an Appalachian identity out of struggle.”¹ In many ways, a field such as Appalachian studies is reactionary to the political and social contexts applied to the subject it studies, in this case, the region of Appalachia. Similar to how the approach in depicting the region has changed, the approach to studying the region can be seen as a reflection of the national attitude of a given moment. As Patricia Beaver said, “One of the things that really made interdisciplinary programs that are grounded in place and community, like Appalachian studies, is the fact that it comes out of a political context or an activist context.”² It forms out of the desire to counteract a narrative, dispel stereotypes, or present different models of understanding a group. Appalachian studies developed in the 1970s in reaction to certain political and social contexts, such as the discrimination that produced the Civil Rights Movement, the new folk revival movement, and concerns over the economics, ecology, and safety of strip mining. Organizations such as the Appalachian Alliance, the Highlander Research and Education Center, and the Council of the Southern Mountains, although not affiliated with universities, served as useful resources for scholars of Appalachia to gather and conduct field research on all these topics. In turn, scholars provided such organizations with support and resources to continue their work. Many of those involved in Appalachian studies could not draw a definitive line between study of the region and activist work in the region, as both were efforts to understand the unique struggles of the region and affect change.

¹ Stephen Fisher, Interview by Emily Booker. Audio recording, Meadowview, VA, February 23, 2015.

² Patricia Beaver, Interview by Emily Booker. Audio recording, Telephone, February 19, 2015.

The study of folklore, folk life, and literature dominated Appalachian studies in its early years. There was a movement in the 1970s to distinguish Appalachian literature apart from Southern literature. Jim Wayne Miller believed the study of Appalachian literature could reveal the region's identity and its relationship to the nation.³ Collections of oral tradition in Appalachia also were a part of the region's literary canon. Scholars recorded tall tales and ballad lyrics to capture the oral tradition of the region. In 1975, Robert Higgs and Ambrose Manning compiled *Voices from the Hills*, which combined creative writing from Appalachia with sociological texts to show regional themes.⁴

Beginning with the handicraft and folk movement of the early twentieth century, schools such as Berea College had established collections of crafts, ballads, and oral histories. Appalachian folk attracted many scholars and collectors at the time. John and Olive Dame Campbell worked in North Carolina conducting ethnographic research on Appalachian society and culture, including traditional ballads. After her husband's death, Olive Dame Campbell opened the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina. The school, which opened in 1925, modeled Danish folk schools, which served as vocational education centers for rural adults in Scandinavia.⁵ It offered classes on agriculture, business, and traditional crafts. Campbell believed that learning and preserving local traditions would give members of the community marketable skills as well as pride in their heritage. As Becker notes, the cultural programs of folk schools in the early twentieth century "focused on archaic survivals rather than on the current and constantly evolving vernacular forms of a changing mountain world."⁶

³ Ted Olson. "Literature," in *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*, ed. Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004): 165.

⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁵ Cati Coe. "The Education of the Folk: Peasant Schools and Folklore Scholarship." *The Journal of American Folklore*, 113, no. 447 (2000): 27.

⁶ Becker, 59.

Furthermore, elites from outside the region controlled the market for handicrafts, thus deciding which traditions were worth preserving. The consumption of folk connected “primitive” Appalachia to modern culture and industrialism but under the definitions and terms of outsiders.⁷

In the late 1960s, there was a renewed interest in the folk. Scholars added to folk collections by documenting audio and video recordings of tunes, ballads, and folk stories. The wide research allowed for variations and developments within tunes, stories, and skills, while still championing the preservation of tradition. At East Tennessee State University, English department faculty members Thomas Burton and Ambrose Manning collected folklore. Burton had a background in English and Scottish ballads, so he was particularly interested in recording Appalachian ballads.⁸ But they recorded any music found in the area, unlike the ballad collectors of the early twentieth century who only focused on finding English ballads. For Burton and Manning, collecting folk recording was about establishing the musical landscape, whatever that entailed. They did not even make a point of defining their research as Appalachian. Burton recalls, “We didn’t set out to delineate the Appalachian region. The initial purpose was to collect any regional, or what would be called Appalachian but regional, folklore. ... Later, we had to start with some designation of what Appalachia was, and we basically used the Appalachian Regional Commission delineation, but that really wasn’t totally satisfactory because that’s really not a cultural designation.”⁹ The political and economic boundaries did not fit into the cultural study and oral history of region. There was also the intent of letting insiders define their traditions and merge them with modern culture. While this still projected an insider/outsider dichotomy, it was a shift away from earlier folk movements that demanded particular tunes or crafts while rejecting anything that showed signs of modern influence.

⁷ Becker, 191.

⁸ Thomas Burton, Interview by Emily Booker. Audio recording, Telephone, February 13, 2015.

⁹ Ibid.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the back to the land movement emphasized living a simple, rural life. This movement admired the uncontroversial, sometimes celebratory, picture of rural poverty presented by the folk life focus of Appalachia. Eliot Wigginton was a folklorist, high school teacher, and founder of the Foxfire Project. To teach interviewing, writing, and editing skills, he had his students interview their neighbors and grandparents in Rabun County, Georgia. The focus of the *Foxfire* books was on traditional, rural folk skills such building log cabins, making soap, or weaving baskets. The first *Foxfire* magazine was published in 1967. The Foxfire books sold millions of copies throughout the 1970s and spurred several similar oral history projects and publications. Some scholars were concerned that the Foxfire Project was not conducting quality folklore research since it was being produced by untrained high school students.¹⁰ However, the Foxfire Project never claimed to be scholarly, merely the oral collection of the community's traditions. In "The Descendants of Foxfire," Thad Sitton notes that *Foxfire* was an "oral folk history" project. He defines "oral folk history," as a "sort of 'phenomenologist' history of the local community—that community's own conceptualization of its past."¹¹

As the folk movement in the 1920s could be seen as a reaction to the modernization and industrialization of the early twentieth century, the back to the land movement of the 1970s also could be seen as a reaction to the rapid social and technological changes of the mid-twentieth century. Beaver recalls, "When I was at Duke, there was this whole folk revival going on, and people were contemplating going back, returning to the land. I think there was a sense of wonder

¹⁰ Thad Sitton, "The Descendants of Foxfire," *The Oral History Review* 6 (1978): 21. Accessed March 31, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25066071>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

about rurality and qualities of rural life. There was a romanticism about it.”¹² Beaver, an anthropologist, originally had trained to study West Africa. However, her advisor lost the funding to go to Africa and moved to a different university, so Beaver decided to study local, rural communities instead. Spurred by the back to earth movement, her initial study presumed a static, pristine, “real” Appalachia. However, once in the field, she realized there was no single Appalachia. She says, “It’s been changing all along. It’s always changed.”¹³

Activism and Appalachia

The War on Poverty, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and Volunteers in Service to America workers brought national attention and increased federal involvement into the region in the 1960s. Some people resisted what they considered government interference by sending outsiders to “fix” the region; others worked with the organizations. Either way, the federal programs made a significant impact on how people in the region viewed problems in the region, models for the cause and resolution to such problems, and solutions applied to Appalachia. For example, Ronald Eller worked as a child welfare case worker in the summer of 1968. Although he was working in his home county in West Virginia, the experience introduced him to a level of poverty he had not witnessed before.¹⁴ That experience led him to pursue academic research on the history of the region.

The proposal for Mars Hill College’s Southern Appalachian Center states, “Social change is inevitable. But radical, forced social change can, and often does, result in a rootless, alienated dispirited people. The citizens of Appalachia have had almost no voice in shaping their future. They have been pawns of outside political and economic interests, but, more importantly, they

¹² Jared W. Gallamore et al, “Engaging in Community Transformation: An Interview with Patricia D. Beaver.” *Appalachian Journal* 41, no. 3-4 (2014): 238.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Eller interview.

have been penalized for not joining the pilgrimage to an urban, industrialized society.”¹⁵ It was sentiments such as these, ones of voiceless citizens who had been used by outsiders, which drove activist efforts into studying and shaping Appalachia.

Fisher was teaching political science at Emory & Henry College when he first became involved with Appalachian resistance. He helped establish a newspaper for southwest Virginia called *The Plow*. Fisher called it “a fairly eclectic” paper that addressed issues of strip mining, industrial development, and power in Appalachia.¹⁶ *The Plow* also served as the newsletter for citizens’ groups who were fighting coal and utility companies. For a long time, coal companies, and later other energy companies, drew criticism from communities for their massive influence. As the largest source of employment in a community, residents often felt controlled by the company. In several instances, companies used money and influence to control local elections. Company towns also had health and social problems, such as poor diets, intestinal disease, work-related injuries, and high divorce rates.¹⁷ As Eller says in *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, most coal operators in the first half of the twentieth century came from outside the region, and those from the region usually represented absentee corporations.¹⁸ This fact contributed to the idea that energy companies were outside enemies coming in to control local communities. The long-standing negative reputation of these companies for banning unions, rigging elections, and damaging the environment often led to community protest. One such community was Brumley Gap, Virginia, which was contesting American Electric Power’s plan to flood its valley. Fisher said that it was through coordinating resistance communication that he began to incorporate his

¹⁵ Mars Hill College, “Proposal for Southern Appalachian Center” (1975), Mars Hill, NC, Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 7, folder 12, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 1.

¹⁶ Fisher interview.

¹⁷ Ronald D Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982): 210, 233.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

politics, activism, and teaching together.¹⁹ *The Plow* included a leadership program for students to learn about regional issues and practice research skills as paid interns on staff.²⁰

The Council of the Southern Mountains is one of the oldest organizations established to address the needs of people in Appalachia. Founded in 1913 by John Campbell with funding by the Russell Sage Foundation, the council operated out of Berea College to coordinate the efforts of preachers, doctors, and social workers in the mountains. It also promoted improvements to public schools and resource development.²¹ Under financial pressure, the office at Berea closed from 1949-1951 and the council shared an office with the Southern Highlands Handicraft Guild in Asheville. In 1951, the council lost its Russell Sage Foundation funding. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the council gained financial support from a number of corporations in the region, especially large energy companies. Corporate members included Carolina Power, Georgia Power, Alabama Power, Kentucky Power, Kentucky Utilities, Kentucky-West Virginia Gas, Kentucky Telephone, Big Sandy-Elkhorn Coal Operators' Association, the West Virginia Coal Association, Debby Coal, and Beth-Elkhorn.²² It also received funding from the Ford Foundation. In 1965, the council received federal funding through the Office of Economic Opportunity.²³ The council remained neutral on many controversial social and political issues. It rarely questioned the political or economic structures already in place. Perley Ayer, who served as director of the Council of the Southern Mountains in the 1950s and 1960s, believed that neutrality was the best way to avoid alienating any specific group. He wanted everyone to feel welcome to participate in the council, regardless of interest or political persuasion. An editorial

¹⁹ Fisher interview.

²⁰ Appalachian Studies Association. "Plow Leadership Program." *Appalink* 2, no. 1 (September 1978): 8, accessed February 25, 2015, Marshall Digital Scholar, Marshall University, Huntington, WV. http://mds.marshall.edu/asa_newsletter/2/.

²¹ David Whisnant, "Controversy in God's Grand Division: The Council of the Southern Mountains," *Appalachian Journal* 2, no. 1 (1974): 9.

²² *Ibid.*, 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, 9; Brown, Burchett-Anderson, Cain, and Deal, with Dorgan, 32.

in *Mountain Life and Work* states, “The Council...never presumes to give instructions or to issue demands. ...We hope to encourage people to do whatever *they* need to do...for the honor and integrity of their kind.”²⁴

The council’s neutrality also helped the organization receive funding from across the political spectrum. However, the amount of money from energy companies, and the number of energy companies and corporations sponsoring the council, made some individual members question how neutral the council really was. There were concerns that big money would lead to corporate control of the council. Ayer maintained that the council would be able to keep a neutral stance. In 1967, a council member at an organizational meeting put forth the suggestion that any company contributing money should get to place a member to the board. That year, five of the eight members of the council’s Regional Economic Development Commission were executives of energy-related companies.²⁵ Members of the council became increasingly divided over its mission and its management. In 1966, Ayer stepped down as director, with Loyal Jones taking over in his place. Jones was a scholar on Appalachian culture, focusing on traditional music, mountain religion, and mountain humor. While still representing the more traditional, scholarly approach, Jones was also an advocate for letting community voices be fully represented on the council. At the next annual business meeting, the council took a new turn, rejecting neutrality as the council’s official stance. Participants voted that within three years, the board would be comprised of 51% poor people. The council established new commissions on Black Appalachians, Poor Peoples’ Self-Help, Aging, and Natural Resources. They also passed a

²⁴ Whisnant, 24.

²⁵ Ibid., 26.

resolution opposing the Vietnam War and welcoming conscientious objectors. Conservatives attending the conference claimed that the meeting had been packed with “radical outsiders.”²⁶

Jones maintained that the Council of the Southern Mountains could continue along a middle ground, welcome to conservatives and liberals, corporate backers and young radicals, alike. However, several corporations withheld funds the following year, putting the council in financial risk.²⁷ Radical changes continued at the annual business meeting the following year. Conference attendants first removed a requirement that one must have been a member of the council for thirty days to vote on resolutions. Then the council members passed several resolutions. One insisted on community control over Office of Economic Opportunity programs. Another was the council’s official condemnation of strip mining and the Tennessee Valley Authority’s purchase of strip mined coal.²⁸ Shortly after the meeting, Jones met with the board to address “the three crises”—lack of money, disputes of management, and “confusion of purpose.” Unable to come to a consensus with the board, Jones resigned shortly thereafter.²⁹

In 1972, the Council of the Southern Mountains fully separated from Berea College, and moved to an office in Dickenson County, Virginia. The move to Virginia was both to separate from its Berea affiliation and to be closer to the communities and groups it was helping. The council aimed to cast itself in a new light, apart from its missionary, folk and craft, and corporate-backed history. As David Whisnant says in an *Appalachian Journal* article on the council’s move, “The old Council’s weakness lay in its tendency to romanticize the conservative and picturesque aspects of folk culture; to overlook the dysfunctional effects of industrialization...to remain neutral when neutrality was impossible...to remain comfortably

²⁶ Whisnant, 35.

²⁷ Ibid., 36.

²⁸ Ibid., 37.

²⁹ Ibid., 38.

inside restrictive ideological boundaries.”³⁰ The new council acted as a people’s movement, helping to sponsor lectures and protests against the operation of strip mining, the inequalities in the welfare system, the rigged health laws that limited black lung compensation.³¹ The council’s split from the college highlighted some of the tensions between activists and academics who were struggling to find a balance where both sides could be heard and satisfied. While both sides desired to help the region, the theories and methods collided irreconcilably. The tensions within the Council of the Southern Mountains over corporate influence and the level of political activism in the late 1960s foreshadowed many of the disagreements among those in Appalachian studies in the following decade.

Another center for community organization, although not affiliated with a university or college but that worked with higher education on addressing regional issues, was the Highlander Research and Education Center, founded as the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, in 1932 by Myles Horton, James Dombrowski, and Don West. Myles Horton studied at Union Theological Seminary, where he shaped his social and economic criticisms of capitalism. He began thinking about a school that would educate and give a voice to the working class.³² James Dombrowski was a Methodist preacher who studied the social gospel.³³ Don West, whom Horton called a “mountain socialist,”³⁴ was both a poet and a labor organizer who had also attended seminary. In 1946, he published *Clods of Southern Earth*, a collection of poems about the working class in Appalachia.³⁵

³⁰ Whisnant, 45.

³¹ Ibid., 42.

³² John M. Glen, *Highlander: No Ordinary School 1932-1962* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 9.

³³ Ibid., 16.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ James J. Lorence, *The New Georgia Encyclopedia Companion to Georgia Literature*, 2011 ed., s.v. “Don West (1906-1992)” Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Based on the Danish folk school model, the Highlander Folk School offered adult residential education programs. Unlike formal, systemic education, this model aimed to educate adults based on their experiences. Horton studied Campbell's work in implementing the Danish folk school model to Appalachia.³⁶ While the John C. Campbell Folk School was also developed on this model, Highlander did not focus on vocational skills or traditional crafts. Rather, its classes focused on politics and economics. Individuals and groups used their personal backgrounds, cultural settings, and identities in shaping their knowledge of and response to problems. In its early years, Highlander focused on labor rights and union organization. In the 1950s and 1960s, Highlander got involved in the Civil Rights Movement and voter registration. The state of Tennessee investigated Highlander under suspicion of Communist ties and involvement with integration actions. This led to the state revoking Highlander's charter and seizing its land in 1961. The organization reopened the next day as the Highlander Research and Education Center, first in Knoxville, then moving its office to New Market, Tennessee.³⁷ In the 1970s, Highlander's focus turned to Appalachia and addressed issues such as land ownership, strip mining, healthcare, and community organization. Horton saw Highlander's mission as continuous, even as its focus shifted from labor unions to civil rights to Appalachia. In a 1981 interview with Bill Moyers, Horton said, "Some people had tried to define Highlander, they said it was just a series of different schools. ...But to me, it's very inaccurate. Highlander has been just one school all the way through. We were just doing the same thing with different groups of people. We try to empower people."³⁸

³⁶ Glen, 13.

³⁷ Highlander Research and Education Center. "The Civil Rights Movement and The Citizenship Schools," accessed March 1, 2015. www.highlandercenter.org/media/timeline.

³⁸ J. W. Williamson and Edwin T. Arnold, ed. "Myles Horton Interviewed by Bill Moyers" (1981) in *Interviewing Appalachia: The Appalachian Journal Interviews, 1978-1992*, ed. by J. W. Williamson and Edwin T. Arnold (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994): 28.

Highlander's focus on Appalachia addressed the labor practices, health and housing conditions, and absentee land ownership in the region, particularly in Central Appalachia. Horton saw the back to the land movement as idealizing rural life, while ignoring systems of exploitation and the global connections existing in the region. He viewed Appalachia through the internal colonialism model, that is, as a region exploited by outsiders. He said, "Appalachia has been the guinea pig of the country. Anybody who wants to try out an idea, they try it out on this region. We've been missionaried [sic] to death...somebody has always been coming in and going to save the region. And they always take out more than they bring in."³⁹ John Gaventa led the adult education program at Highlander in the 1970s and was also active among academic circles as an author and vocal member of the Appalachian Studies Association. He wrote *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, which challenged the political and economic structure contributing to the problems of poverty and unemployment in the region. He encouraged scholars at universities and colleges to be more involved with social justice issues in the region.

The Appalachian Alliance developed in 1977 as a response to the severe flooding in Central Appalachia in the spring of that year. Many people felt that the local and federal government had failed in preventing or responding to the flooding.⁴⁰ Federal relief trailers had been sent to the area for people whose homes has been destroyed, but there were problems with getting the trailers set up, due to the coal companies owning most of the flat land.⁴¹ The Alliance's first meeting was held in May 1977 in Williamson, West Virginia. Its goal was to support communities in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia in gaining democratic

³⁹ Williamson and Arnold, 41.

⁴⁰ Appalachian Alliance, "The Appalachian Alliance," (January 1982), New Market, TN, Appalachian Alliance Collection, box 1, folder 16, Archives of Appalachia, ETSU: 1.

⁴¹ Beaver interview.

control over the land. Notes from a 1982 meeting of the Alliance state, “The Alliance’s role in working with its member groups should be as active a one as possible. When a group emerges with a lot of potential or is on the move, the Alliance should actively aid in pulling in more folks for that effort.”⁴² The organization’s main goal was to serve as an umbrella organization, so that agencies and communities could coordinate and share resources.

Matters of Social Justice

One of the initial goals of the Appalachian Alliance was to conduct a clear study on who owned the surface and sub-surface land in Appalachia. In August of 1978, Appalachian Regional Commission staff met with the public at Highlander to discuss the commission’s Land Settlement Study. There were disagreements about the assumptions underlying the research. According to an *Appalink* report of the meeting, “The ARC position on the desirability of ‘growth center’ urbanization and development was unanimously challenged by the workshop participants who emphasized the significance of the small farm and the rural way of life and the need for the federal government to support that way of life.”⁴³ As a result, Tom Plaut and John Gaventa, representing the Appalachian Studies Conference, and Beth and Martha Spence, representing the Appalachian Alliance, went to Washington for the Appalachian Regional Commission’s August meeting to further discuss the topic.⁴⁴

Sponsored by the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Land Ownership Study involved several organizations, as well as community participation. Instead of the federal government sending representatives out to the communities, the communities would participate

⁴² Appalachian Alliance, “Annual Meeting Notes,” (June 1982), New Market, TN, Appalachian Alliance collection, box 1, folder 9, Archives of Appalachia, ETSU.

⁴³ Appalachian Studies Association. “Proposed ARC Land Study Challenged at Workshop,” *Appalink* 2, no. 1 (September 1978): 5, accessed February 25, 2015, Marshall Digital Scholar, Marshall University, Huntington, WV. http://mds.marshall.edu/asa_newsletter/2/.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

in their own research and develop tools and solutions from the ground up.⁴⁵ Appalachian State University served as the home institution for Appalachian Regional Commission funding purposes.⁴⁶ In 1981, the Appalachian Regional Commission released the report, showing the extent of corporate and absentee ownership of land and mineral rights in Appalachia. The report also showed direct correlations between absentee ownership and inadequate taxation, number of welfare recipients, poor health, and environmental damage.⁴⁷ For many, the report's findings supported the theory of the internal colonialism model. However, others cautioned against applying the internal colonialism model to the region because of similarities in terms of ownership and power. The internal colonialism model presented the people within the colony as a homogeneous culture, victims of exploitation who shared similar backgrounds and traditions. In this sense, the model did not account for the diversity of experience between people of different race, gender, or religion. And perhaps most importantly, it did not account for class differences within the region or acknowledge that some citizens of the region were land and industry owners.⁴⁸

The traditional, homogenous picture of Appalachia paid little attention to ethnic minorities, such as Native Americans or African Americans. According to the 1970 census, 1.3 million of the 18.2 million people in Appalachia were black.⁴⁹ Academics sometimes studied the Eastern Band of Cherokee, but there was little effort to reconcile being Native American and Appalachian. Scholarship rarely addressed black Appalachian heritage nor Jewish and Catholic traditions, perpetuating the stereotype that Appalachian meant white, and specifically Anglo-Saxon Protestant. The myth that Appalachia was racially homogenous also led to avoiding the

⁴⁵ Beaver interview.

⁴⁶ Gallamore et al, 242.

⁴⁷ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 199.

⁴⁸ Fisher interview.

⁴⁹ Walls and Billings, 136.

issue of racism and discrimination, which had become unavoidable in the Deep South. The Highlander Center worked on integration efforts in the region, including the integration of unions. Horton recalled working with a farmers union at Highlander in the 1950s when some of the white men became upset that black men had shown up. He announced that all farmers were welcome to the union meeting and then he asked for the white men to check that the black men were farmers. When they confirmed as farmers, they were allowed to stay without further protest. Horton said, “I put them in a different category. They weren’t blacks. They were farmers. We do that all the time, help people perceive things differently.”⁵⁰

The Appalachian Consortium, a collective of institutions in Southern Appalachia, hosted Appalachian Issues Forums with lectures focusing on the experiences and concerns of particular minority groups in the region. The first forum was held at Warren Wilson College on October 12-13, 1979, on the topic “The Role of Blacks in the Mountains.” Ed Cabbell, the director of the John Henry Memorial Foundation, spoke. Topics included “Black Heritage in Appalachia,” “Research and Teaching Methods for Black Studies in Appalachia,” and “Black Folklore and Music in the Mountains.”⁵¹ Cabbell was one of the first scholars to receive a master’s in Appalachian studies from Appalachian State University. His work focused on the representation of blacks in Appalachia. The John Henry Memorial Foundation in Princeton, West Virginia, focused on research and education on the history and culture of black Appalachians.

Appalachian studies and women’s studies developed at roughly the same time, gaining traction in higher education through inter-collegiate collaborations and offering Appalachian or women-focused courses in already established disciplines. Both challenged the traditional narratives of a group and sought to give individuals in that group a stronger voice and control

⁵⁰ Williamson and Arnold, 36.

⁵¹ Martha McKinney to Appalachian Consortium, “Appalachian Issues Forum,” (October 5, 1979). Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 6, University Archives, ETSU.

over creating their own identity and narrative. In 1977, Alice Mathews of Western Carolina University conducted a survey and concluded that 14 of 18 surveyed colleges or universities in Appalachia offered at least one course in women's studies.⁵² Marshall University and the University of Tennessee also had women's resource centers. Eleven schools had faculty engaged in research pertaining to women's studies. Mathews concludes that existing programs lay a foundation for region-wide women's studies. An Appalachian Consortium article on the survey notes that "several of these faculty members were particularly interested in Appalachian women."⁵³ The Council on Appalachian Women was established in 1976. Mars Hill College served as the headquarters. Patricia Beaver worked closely with Maggie McFadden, the director of women's studies at Appalachian State University to organize a council that could focus on the needs of women in the mountains. Beaver said, "There's always been a kinship between women's studies and Appalachian studies."⁵⁴ In 1978, the council received a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission for programs to aid and educate rural women.⁵⁵

Together, Beaver and McFadden also brought the publication of the *National Women's Studies Association Journal* to Appalachian State University for several years. Roberta Herrin, director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, said that the Appalachian studies movement gave women opportunities for leadership and advancement in academics that well-established disciplines at the time did not.⁵⁶ As an emerging field, there was not yet an established hierarchy, and because Appalachian studies encouraged voices from various disciplines and the discussions of various topics, women were able to take

⁵² Appalachian Consortium. "Survey on Women's Studies," *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (March 1979) Series 1, box 9, folder 7. Arthur DeRosier Papers, University Archives, ETSU: 5.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Gallamore et al, 245.

⁵⁵ Julie Marie Blevins. "The Council on Appalachian Women: Short Lived but Long Lasting." (Master's thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2012): 51.

⁵⁶ Roberta Herrin. Interview by Emily Booker. Audio recording. Johnson City, TN, March 2, 2015.

leading roles from the beginning. For example several women served as presidents of the Appalachian Studies Association and as directors of university centers for regional study. Linda Scott served as the first director of the Institute for Appalachian Affairs at East Tennessee State University, and Patricia Beaver served as acting director in the first year of the Center for Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University.⁵⁷

The second Appalachian Issues Forum was held at Mars Hill on February 13, 1980 with the topic “Appalachian Women and Family.” Mars Hill, the Appalachian Consortium, and the Council on Appalachian Women sponsored the forum, which consisted of three lectures by Sharon Lord from the University of Tennessee. Lord had also served as chairperson of the Appalachian Studies Conference. Topics of the forum included: “Growing Up Female in Appalachia,” “Resources for Women’s Studies in Appalachia,” and “The Changing Role of Women in the Appalachian Family.”⁵⁸

However, the inclusion of class, race, and gender diversity into Appalachian studies still failed to articulate a regional identity. When they were addressed, minorities were given a special space and not fully integrated into a comprehensive narrative for the region. Because of the history of defining Appalachia as rural, poor, and Scots-Irish, minorities continued to be underrepresented in discussions of Appalachian identity. As Richard Drake notes, “Appalachianness” is elusive, with no emerging identity.⁵⁹ The back to the land movement, in part, continued to support the traditional idea of rural poverty as Appalachia. Celebration of the simple, homespun folk life perpetuated the long-standing stereotypes and reinforced the dichotomy of insider and outsider. Such a dichotomy leaves little room for diversity in the

⁵⁷ East Tennessee State University. “Dedication of the Institute for Appalachian Affairs,” April 1978, Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 1, University Archives, ETSU; Beaver interview.

⁵⁸ Mars Hill College to Appalachian Consortium. “Forum on Appalachian Women and Family” (February 1, 1980) Mars Hill, NC. Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 10, University Archives, ETSU.

⁵⁹ Drake, 193.

region. For example, Cratis Williams taught Appalachian literature and folk life at Appalachian State University. He promoted interdisciplinary research of the region as well as giving voice to the people of the region. Yet his description of people in the mountains is reminiscent of the characterizations of earlier writers, such as John Fox, Jr. or William G. Frost in that he recounts Scots-Irish heritage, Calvinist values, and rural isolation, as hegemonic traits.⁶⁰

Similarly, the activist side also can be subject to the insider/outsider dichotomy. The internal colonialism model presents all outside influence as exploitative to the region. It is the “outside speculators” who moved into Appalachia and exploited the region for its resources.⁶¹ It presents all insiders as victims of outside influence, not accounting for the diversity of people in the region, and most of all, not accounting for the exploitation that can take place within a region. As Fisher noted, several of the coal company owners were from the region themselves, but they did not fit into the stereotype of poor and rural.⁶² But perhaps it is difficult for activists or scholars to break out of the insider/outsider descriptions if, as Fisher suggests, Appalachian identity arises from struggle. As Myles Horton said, “A struggle, in my point of view, is not only the moral thing to do, but it’s a great learning experience. The greatest education comes from action, and the greatest action is struggle for justice.”⁶³ Confronting, challenging, and coming to terms with various social, political, and economic situations might not just be subjects of regional study but the very root of regional study.

⁶⁰ Cratis Williams, “Seminar—Characteristics of Mountaineers” October 25, 1973 Cratis D. Williams Papers, box 53, folder 29, box 15, folder 2, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

⁶¹ Lewis and Knipe, 17.

⁶² Fisher interview.

⁶³ Williamson and Arnold, 30.

CHAPTER 4

THE FORMATION OF APPALACHIAN STUDIES AS A FIELD

In the early 1970s, many scholars and activists were working in regional study and community work in Appalachia. This work mainly stayed within existing disciplines that incorporated the region as a geographic or cultural context to the disciplinary study. For example, English departments might discuss Appalachian literature and ecology departments might research the environmental effects of strip mining, but there was little discussion between the two departments on cultural and political narratives involved or how the two studies might be components of a broader picture of the region. Some universities and colleges taught emphasis classes or held forums on Appalachia, but the projects and studies related to Appalachia were disconnected from one another. There was little interdisciplinary interaction focused on the region.

The growth of interdisciplinary programs such as women's studies or African American studies arose around the same time as the revitalization of regionalism. All three of these fields encouraged interdisciplinarity to create new learning space for groups that traditionally had been marginalized from the mainstream. In comments to the Appalachian Consortium, an organization consisting of colleges and public organizations in Southern Appalachia, William H. Plemmons noted that the Appalachian Regional Commission, regardless of one's assessment of its involvement in the region, brought national attention to Appalachia by singling the region out as both unique and troubled. Such focus led to universities' interest in studying the history and culture of Appalachia.¹ Academics began to consider the possibility that a field of study could center on the region of Appalachia. Place could serve as the focus, incorporating the social,

¹ Appalachian Consortium. "Letter from William H. Plemmons." *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (April 1978) Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 10, University Archives, ETSU: 1.

cultural, political, and economic investigation of the region. Activists considered this regional study as a way for communities to learn about the social, cultural, political, and economic influences that affected their jobs, education, and health. A community knowledgeable of its region could take action and seek solutions to its problems. Scholars and activists desired to form an organization devoted to the study of Appalachia that would encourage scholars in different disciplines to share their work and ideas. For example, when Patricia Beaver was working on her Ph.D. dissertation, her anthropology committee members at Duke University did not know much about Appalachia as a region, so she asked Cratis Williams to serve on her committee as well. Williams' background was in literature, and by working with him, Beaver's anthropological understanding of the region began to incorporate an understanding of literature and the role of narrative. She said, "Now of course his field was literature, but by becoming aware of his body of knowledge and the things that he taught, I realized how the literature of Appalachia could inform my own work as an anthropologist, that ethnographic story. I got very interested...in the notion of narrative ethnography, what is truth, and sometimes the truth of fiction could be more real than the ethnographic account before it."²

One of the earliest attempts at organizing Appalachian studies took place in 1970 at Clinch Valley College, where Helen Lewis taught as a sociologist. Leaving the structure of a single discipline, she taught the first interdisciplinary class on Appalachia at Clinch Valley College based on the seminar in the social work program she had led the previous year. Lewis observed the conditions in which many of her students lived in coalfield communities and the power coal companies had over those communities. Beaver said of Lewis that this interaction with coal communities led her "to question the models and stereotypes of Appalachia that assume there was [sic] stagnant communities, 'backward'-thinking people, all those old

² Beaver interview.

stereotypes.”³ Lewis saw a region that had become victim of a powerful influence, the coal companies. Her theories on internal colonialism as applied to Appalachia shaped much of the discussion on the role of industry, land ownership, and insider/outsider perspective through the 1970s. The course read “struggle” literature and interviewed local musicians, coal miners, and welfare rights activists.⁴ In 1970, the Appalachian Conference at Clinch Valley College addressed the need for regular conferences, for region-based research projects, and for an Appalachian studies curriculum. It also addressed the need for more recognition and discussion on matters of race, poverty, and social agendas in the region.⁵

One way in which scholars learned about others’ work on Appalachia was through academic journals. The first issue of the *Appalachian Journal* appeared in the fall of 1972. Published through Appalachian State University, the journal contained essays, poems, and fiction about the region. It encouraged submissions from all disciplines. Jerry Williamson, with a background in English, became the journal’s first editor. In a 1999 interview with Patricia Beaver and Helen Lewis, Williamson recalled, “Someone wanted to call it *Appalachian Review*, but West Virginia University had already tried a magazine under that title...I think the notion in everybody’s mind was sort of a graduate-level *Foxfire*. *Foxfire* had just made a big splash. The first *Foxfire* book had become a best seller. Of course, if we had actually gone in the *Foxfire* direction, we’d have a very different and I’d say less important publication.”⁶ Whereas *Foxfire* focused on oral histories and folk traditions, the *Appalachian Journal* took a scholarly approach

³ Beaver interview.

⁴ Berea College Appalachian Center. “Clinch Valley Workshop.” *Appalachian Center Newsletter* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1973): 1, accessed March 21, 2015, Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, Berea College, Berea, KY. <http://www.berea.edu/appalachian-center/files/2013/07/Vol-2-Iss-3-Summer-1973.pdf>.

⁵ Brown, Burchett-Anderson, Cain, and Deal, with Dorgan, 32.

⁶ Jerry Williamson, Interview with Pat Beaver and Helen Lewis, “A Cold Day in Hell”, 1999. Patricia Beaver Papers, Box 7, Folder 18, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Belk Library, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC: 3.

to its presentation of the region. Although it began with an emphasis on folk study and creative writing from the region, over its first few years, the journal began carrying more articles addressing contemporary economic and social problems and the need for reevaluation on the discussion of Appalachia's history. As editor, Williamson sought out scholars from all over the region whose work in various fields related to Appalachia. Williamson said, "I wrote hundreds of letters the first year, all of which I typed myself on an old Royal. I didn't have any secretarial support at all and no computer. This was back when I was using a lot of white-out [sic]. I would go to Belk Library every evening after dinner and go through indexes, looking for the word Appalachia and finding addresses and writing blind letters."⁷

In 1974, Appalachian State University held a conference for scholars to discuss the future of Appalachia. Academics, activists, politicians, and business owners attended. Wilma Dykeman gave the keynote speech, and Doc and Merle Watson performed. However, the conference did not produce any resolutions or plans for future conferences. A representative from Berea College noted that the conference felt reminiscent of the Council of the Southern Mountains in the years right before its split from the college, that there were too many competing agendas to get anything done. He noted, "The problem in all this was that the conference had tried to embrace everybody who had any opinion about the future," and that "everybody seemed offended to find people there who didn't share their own notions about things. It really looked as though several different invitation lists had been inadvertently combined."⁸

In 1977, the *Appalachian Journal* published "A Guide to Appalachian Studies," an issue devoted to current scholarship of the region and reflection on such scholarship. Stephen Fisher

⁷ Williamson interview with Beaver and Lewis, 7.

⁸ Berea College Appalachian Center. "Deja vu in Boone." *Appalachian Center Newsletter* 3, no. 3 (Summer 1974): 2, accessed March 21, 2015, Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, Berea College, Berea, KY. <http://www.berea.edu/appalachian-center/files/2013/07/Vol-3-Iss-3-Summer-1974.pdf>.

worked with Williamson to edit the issue. They made the effort to include as many disciplines as possible to show the breadth of the emerging interdisciplinary field: anthropology, archeology, folklore, geography, history, literature, linguistics, music, political science, religion, and sociology. The issue also addressed the question of what Appalachian studies should entail and what models and theories should apply to the region. Several people were addressing the new political and social dynamics that had come out of the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Poverty, and the creation of the Appalachian Regional Commission. Others were working in disciplines that continued to focus on the traditional study of literature and folk culture but also desired representation in the emerging interdisciplinary field. An example of this would be Thomas Burton, who participated in the formation of centers and programs for Appalachian studies at East Tennessee State University. However, he also continued to focus his research on folklore and recordings. He said, “My interests continued in the same that we first started with, the genres of folklore and traditional activities. That’s where it started, and it continued that way.”⁹

Cratis Williams was a scholar of Appalachian literature, language, and ballads. He promoted an increase in courses, forums, and research on Appalachia at Appalachian State University. His 1961 dissertation entitled “The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction” reflected the traditional idea that Appalachians created a unique culture, shaped by their Scots-Irish heritage and generations of relative isolation from the rest of the nation. Williams even saw distinguishing physical features in mountaineers. He said, “They are physically different, from their blond hair and blue or hazel eyes to the way that they carry themselves. Williams said, “They walk with a mountaineer lope, which is a mile-eating pace... The idea is to tilt yourself

⁹ Burton interview.

forward so that all the weight is on the front of the feet as you go.”¹⁰ He also cited hyper-Calvinism, distrust of outsiders, and strong individualism as traits of the people. However, while earlier writers would urge the need to change these characteristics, Williams promoted the celebration of such a culture. He wanted students from the region to be proud of their heritage. For Williams, the Appalachian man should be envied by an American middle class that had become jaded by modernity and materialism.¹¹

Williams promoted the increase of regional study, even if his idea of the region was one of a static, homogeneous mountain community. He said:

To cultivate again the dormant culture of the mountains, to bring forth anew growth from grafts onto our original stock, to go back to our beginnings for that strength needed for reaffirmation of America and an achievement of a new balance in our society for a future that will provide more room for the human being himself to function as a free individual, we must preserve the mountains, save Appalachia from becoming a waste land in which the last remnant of our original stock will be destroyed by the acid waters that flow from the agony and desolation and be no more.¹²

In 1976, Jerry Williamson organized a retirement celebration and symposium for Cratis Williams at Appalachian State University. Many Appalachian studies scholars see the Cratis Williams Symposium as the marked beginning of the organization of Appalachian studies. Scholars from various universities and across disciplines met to honor Williams’ work and discuss the scholarship of the region. Topics of the symposium included “Appalachia in Context,” “Appalachian Personality,” “Literary Traditions and Folklore,” and “Oral Arts.” There was disagreement among the editors as to which topic certain papers belonged, as many could apply to several topics. The papers also included contradictory descriptions or definitions of

¹⁰ Cratis Williams “Characteristics of Mountaineers,” Cratis D. Williams Papers, box 53, folder 29. W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 2.

¹¹ Ron Larson interviewing Cratis Williams. “The Appalachian Personality,” *Appalachian Heritage*, Spring 1983. Cratis D. Williams Papers, box 53, folder 15. W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

¹² Ibid.

Appalachia.¹³ What boundaries made up Appalachia? Who is Appalachian? What is the region's history? What is its relationship with the nation and other regions? As Williamson noted, "One of the major controversies in Appalachian research and scholarship has been the numerous descriptions of people in Appalachia and the dearth of observation or hard data to validate these descriptions."¹⁴ It was easiest to use the Appalachian Regional Commission's map in determining boundaries, because it was a federally-sanctioned map that everyone could access. So it was used begrudgingly, although almost everyone found flaws in trying to apply the map when discussing history, culture, or sociology. Fisher said, "I don't accept the ARC definition, which is a totally political definition. But the problem is that all the statistics in Appalachia are based on that definition."¹⁵ The map offered a cohesive definition but ignored a lot of nuance. This was the concern of many in Appalachian studies as it formed: that creating a single organization or identity would lose the diversity and context necessary for a comprehensive understanding of Appalachia.

During the symposium, many attendees expressed a desire for a regular interdisciplinary forum for Appalachian scholars where they could present their work. Beaver noted that the attendees of this event still were very much rooted in their own disciplines. Their studies were not interdisciplinary yet, but they shared a common interest in how the region related to their disciplines and they saw the potential for future interdisciplinary work.¹⁶ This led to the creation of an *ad hoc* planning committee to explore Appalachian conferences. The committee was comprised of Richard Drake of Berea College, Borden Mace of the Appalachian Consortium,

¹³ J. W. Williamson. "Introduction," in *An Appalachian Symposium*, edited by J. W. Williamson, (Boone, NC: *The Appalachian Journal*, 1977), vi.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Fisher interview.

¹⁶ Beaver interview.

and Sarah Evelyn Jackson of Georgia Tech.¹⁷ Drake convened a planning conference at Berea the following year, inviting scholars, activists, and community members to discuss the region and the direction of the study of the region. One of the issues addressed was where the offices of this new institution would be housed. Some suggested Berea College because of the school's long tradition of regional study and because Drake had organized the planning conference. However, others protested on the grounds that Berea College was a small, conservative school that might not promote progressive social justice movements. Williamson said, "There was an intellectual power struggle going on even then between Berea and everybody else, because Berea was seen by Fisher and other politically active people as very conservative and dedicated to this culture of poverty model and not into the political power and powerless theories that were coming on strong at the time."¹⁸

The result of the planning meeting was the establishment of an annual Appalachian Studies Conference. Ronald Eller recalls that many people were worried about organizing into an association. He said, "There was a very strong sense that it not be called an association, that there was a strong fear that if we created an association, Appalachian studies would become institutionalized, much more academic, and therefore, increasingly separate from the communities in the region."¹⁹ That was why the organization was named the Appalachian Studies Conference, not the Appalachian Studies Association, even though it would take on the latter name some years later. However, the objectives set forth at the planning conference leaned toward an academic, organizational overhead. Objectives included: holding an annual conference, providing a forum for presentation of research, coordinating analysis across disciplinary lines, disseminating knowledge of Appalachia, advocating Appalachian research,

¹⁷ Brown, Burchett-Anderson, Cain, and Deal, with Dorgan, 34.

¹⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁹ Eller interview.

supporting other organizations, and relating scholarship to regional needs and concerns of the Appalachian people.²⁰ While academics had a larger presence, there was a conscious effort for activists and community members to have a role in the Appalachian Studies Conference. Chad Berry said, “It was expressly designed to bring scholars and activists together for the mutual benefit of the region and its people.”²¹

The first Appalachian Studies Conference took place at Berea in 1978. Drake again convened the conference and Fisher served as program director.²² Sharon Lord, the director of the Appalachian Center at the University of Tennessee, became the first conference chairperson. The theme of the conference was “Appalachian Studies: Where Do We Go From Here?” Speakers included poet Jim Wayne Miller, folklorist Archie Green, novelist Gurney Norman, and activist John Gaventa.²³ Gaventa gave the keynote titled “Which Side Are We On? Appalachian Inequality in the Appalachian Studies Industry,” in which he challenged scholars to be more active in the region. He criticized the “industry of academics” for replicating a capitalist power structure and being complacent in the exploitation of the region.²⁴ Overall, however, most of the sessions were academic in nature.²⁵ According to Drake, some scholars worried that an activist focus would lead to advocacy research, guided more by political motivations than by academic standards.²⁶ This concern was heightened by Appalachian studies being a developing field, seeking to gain recognition and funding in academic intuitions. It needed the support of universities, which in turn relied on support from local donors and politicians, who might be

²⁰ Brown, Burchett-Anderson, Cain, and Deal, with Dorgan, 35.

²¹ Berry interview.

²² Fisher interview.

²³ Berea College Appalachian Center. “Appalachian Studies,” *Appalachian Center Newsletter* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 2, accessed March 21, 2015, Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, Berea College, Berea, KY. <http://www.berea.edu/appalachian-center/files/2013/07/Vol-7-Iss-2-Spring-1978.pdf>.

²⁴ Williamson, Interview with Beaver and Lewis, 13.

²⁵ Brown, Burchett-Anderson, Cain, and Deal, with Dorgan, 37.

²⁶ Drake, 193.

reluctant to support a radicalized field that resisted energy companies and challenged authority. There were tensions within the conference on how involved to be in activist work, but the disagreements rarely fell into two clearly-defined camps. While the tensions could be broken down into “pure scholarship” versus “direct action,” in reality, most participants in the conferences fell somewhere in between the two.²⁷

The first conference also held meetings on the structure and operation for future conferences. The Appalachian Studies Conference would operate as a yearly, independent conference with different locations, hosts, and themes each year. This would reflect the diversity of the field. It also would prevent the conference from being dominated by a single institution’s agenda or focus. In an effort to give both activists and academics a voice in the conferences, the hosts and themes would alternate every year, one year focusing on activism and the next on academics. For example, the host of the second Appalachian Studies Conference was Jackson’s Mill 4-H State Camp in Weston, West Virginia, with a focus on the ongoing land ownership study, followed by East Tennessee State University the following year with a theme of “Appalachia/America” and a more academic tone. One problem with this arrangement, however, is that the conference lacked a unifying direction or specific goal. While Appalachia unified the various interests of the conference attendees, their work in the region varied greatly. Would the conference be able to cater to the different topics, or would it need to direct its focus, be it toward folklore, coal, literature, or participatory research? Without continuity from year to year, it would be difficult for the conference to build upon previous years. Attendees of the conferences also disagreed about the goal of Appalachian studies in general. While Appalachian studies had room for activism, was that a tenet or goal of the field? Yet could Appalachian study not involve an element of regional activism? As Drake questioned, “What ‘results’ do we need?

²⁷ Fisher interview.

Is it enough to celebrate a poem or a song? Or must scholarship lead the march on Frankfort or Washington?”²⁸

Despite early efforts to keep costs down, welcome individual community members, and shy away from overhead, the Appalachian Studies Conference did become the Appalachian Studies Association in 1987. For years, Eller had worried about the conference becoming too much of an academic institution. He said, “Appalachian studies as a whole began to be much more accepted in institutions all up and down the ridge, and as Appalachian studies programs began to be created, there began to be pressure to create a formal Appalachian studies organization called the Appalachian Studies Association, which is what we have now.”²⁹ The decision also reflected practicality, as academics needed a formal organization in order to receive funding to attend meetings from their schools or for the purposes of promotion and tenure.

The Appalachian Consortium, another organization dedicated to the study of Appalachia, began in 1970. The founding institutions were East Tennessee State University, Lees-McRae College, Mars Hill College, and Appalachian State University, which hosted the office space. After a couple of years, the consortium hired a fulltime executive director, Borden Mace, and an office staff.³⁰ A 1977 description from the organization states, “The Appalachian Consortium is primarily an educational organization established for the purpose of preserving the values and further developing the quality of life in Southern Appalachia through the cooperative efforts of member institutions and agencies in documentation of the Appalachian heritage, promotion of knowledge concerning the region and its people, and initiation of programs for regional

²⁸ Fisher interview.

²⁹ Eller interview.

³⁰ Herbert W. Wey. “Cratis Williams and App Studies at ASU” (Apr 7, 1976) Pat Beaver Papers, box 15, folder 2, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 3.

cooperation and development.”³¹ The consortium consisted of members from local universities, colleges, and regional institutions. In addition to the founding institutions, members of the consortium included: Ferrum College, University of North Carolina at Asheville, Warren Wilson College, Western Carolina University, Blue Ridge Parkway, First Tennessee-Virginia Development District, U. S. Forest Service, and Western North Carolina Historical Association. The focus of the consortium was rooted in the idea that an institution made up of members from both public and private colleges, as well as public agencies, could share resources to study Appalachia in a full context.³² The consortium met every three months. As Beaver recalled, the consortium offered an opportunity for academics from both large and small schools to interact with one another and share ideas, as well as the opportunity for scholars to meet with those outside of higher education, such as forest rangers and district planners.³³

The Appalachian Consortium Press was established in 1972. One of the first book publications from the press was *The Cherokee Perspective: Written by Eastern Cherokees*, edited by Jim Hornbuckle.³⁴ The publishing committee felt it was important to give a voice to the Cherokee of western North Carolina.³⁵ During the editing process, when there was concern about the level of scholarship in the book, Burt Purrington noted, “The Cherokee people themselves can be allowed a certain amount of leeway in their presentations of themselves because it is *their perspective* on themselves and their history which is important, in fact the most important part of the book.”³⁶ Another one of the consortium’s successful publications was *Colonialism in Modern*

³¹ Appalachian Consortium. “Description.” (1977). Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 11. University Archives, ETSU: 1.

³² Wey, 3.

³³ Beaver interview.

³⁴ See: Jim Hornbuckle, editor, *The Cherokee Perspective: Written by Eastern Cherokees*. (Boone, NC: The Appalachian Consortium Press, 1982).

³⁵ Burt Purrington to Borden Mace and Susan Huffman, “The Cherokee Perspective.” Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 11. University Archives, ETSU.

³⁶ Ibid.

America: The Appalachian Case, edited by Helen Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins.

The book addressed the internal colonialism model and how it applied to the coalfields of Appalachia.³⁷

The Appalachian Consortium also held meetings specifically geared toward librarians. The collaboration among librarians greatly benefited all the scholars, because each school then had a contact who knew what other schools' libraries had and how to access those resources. It made sharing resources and research easier.³⁸ These librarians also were involved in the creation of Appalachian special collections, such as the William L. Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University.

Centers and Institutes at Colleges and Universities

While scholars were meeting and collaborating through academic journals and associations across the region, they also were establishing space for Appalachian studies at their home universities and colleges. Centers for the study of Appalachia would allow academics from various disciplines to collaborate on regionally-related issues and would be able to host forums for students and members of the community. Those seeking to create a space for Appalachian studies on campus often met resistance from the administration. Administrative concerns were that Appalachian studies was an academic fad, that it would steal resources from other disciplines, and that the activist element of the field would be off-putting to donors. However, the biggest hurdle in establishing centers for Appalachian studies on campuses was funding. Grants from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Office of Economic Opportunity made possible the establishment of centers for Appalachian study on universities and college campuses.

³⁷ See: Helen Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins, editors. *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*. (Boone, NC: The Appalachian Consortium, 1978).

³⁸ Beaver interview.

Berea College's history of Appalachian studies can be traced as far back as the founding of the Council of the Southern Mountains in 1913. Berea College also developed a large collection of folk music, oral stories, and traditional crafts. The Berea College Appalachian Center, now named the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, was established in 1970. Loyal Jones served as the director there after his time as director of the Council of the Southern Mountains. Jones' research in folk culture and folk music influenced the direction of the center.³⁹ The center, for the most part, maintained a folk view of the region, focusing on agriculture, music, and crafts. It offered a summer seminar on Appalachian history and literature for public school teachers.⁴⁰ The Appalachian Museum at Berea College sponsored the Folklife Project, a series on traditional ways of living, such as gardening, coon hunting, and hog butchering. It also sponsored seminars on such topics as log structures and coal mining.⁴¹ As Eller noted, Appalachian centers tend to reflect the interests of their universities and the research of the faculty at any given time. Berea's long-standing emphasis on craft and culture, as well as its break with the Council of the Southern Mountains, contributed to its Appalachian Center being more conservative than centers that developed out of activist backgrounds.

Appalachian State University also has a long history of Appalachian studies, going back to the work of Cratis Williams. As a result of the turnout and support of the Cratis Williams Symposium in 1976, Jerry Williamson petitioned for the formation of a Center for Appalachian Studies on Appalachian State's campus, as well as the creation of Appalachian studies degree programs, both of which began in 1978.⁴² Patricia Beaver served as interim director for the first

³⁹ Berry interview.

⁴⁰ Gordon B. McKinney, *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Berea College Appalachian Center." Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006.

⁴¹ Appalachian Studies Association. "An Explanation of the Appalachian Museum Folklife Project." *Appalink*, 3, no. 2 (September 1979), Marshall Digital Scholar, Marshall University, Huntington, WV: 3.

⁴² Brown, Burchett-Anderson, Cain, and Deal, with Dorgan, 34.

year. The Center for Appalachian Studies' mission states that the center will be "concerned with those activities which explore, investigate, serve, and enhance the region, and which function to clarify regional identity."⁴³ The center oversaw the development of undergraduate and graduate curricula for Appalachian State University.

Also in 1978, Arthur H. DeRosier became president of East Tennessee State University. Part of DeRosier's vision for East Tennessee State University was to see an increase in regional study. His views on regional study focused on dismantling the old stereotypes of Appalachia and promoting the celebration of regional culture. In the article "ETSU and Appalachia: A Regional Partnership," DeRosier said of his goal for the university's focus on the region, "We would think beyond the classroom and try to preserve the region's cultural richness while talking about and working on economic problems and health concerns. All the while we would try to convince everyone in the region that Appalachia was second to no other region in a nation known for its diversity and multiple regional contributions."⁴⁴ The "Symposium on Appalachian Studies" was held in conjunction with DeRosier's inauguration as president. This included the dedication of the Institute for Appalachian Affairs, the establishment of the Archives of Appalachia, and a festival of music and crafts.⁴⁵ East Tennessee State University had held folk festivals coordinated by Burton and Manning since 1966.⁴⁶ The annual festivals had music performances, craft exhibits, and a rifle competition. Several local schools brought their children, and attendance was in the thousands.⁴⁷

⁴³ Center for Appalachian Studies. "ASU Center for Appalachian Studies Charter," (July 14, 1978) Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 6, folder 16, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 1.

⁴⁴ Arthur DeRosier, "ETSU and Appalachia: A Regional Partnership." *Now & Then: The Appalachian Magazine*, 20, no. 2&3 (Summer/Winter 2003): 40.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Burton interview.

⁴⁷ Thomas Burton and Ambrose Manning to Don Carter, "1970 Folk Festival." October 6, 1970. Delos P. Culp Records, 1924-1974, series 3, box 29, folder 11, University Archives, ETSU.

The university received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to establish the Institute for Appalachian Affairs. Director Linda Scott said that service was the primary goal of the institute. She saw folk festivals as a means of gathering people to address more serious subjects. She said, "I thought the celebration of culture was nice, but I saw that pretty much as putting a bell jar over a place and having everyone look at them."⁴⁸ In 1980, the Institute for Appalachian Affairs hosted a nine-week series on energy, addressing the Tennessee Valley Authority, energy conservation, energy policy, oil, coal, nuclear energy, and alternative energy sources such as wind and solar.⁴⁹ It also coordinated seminars on health and education.

In 1984, the State of Tennessee designated a Center of Excellence in Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University. Centers of Excellence receive state support to broaden research and service in public higher education. The Archives of Appalachia, the Reece Museum, and the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, which had taken over the functions of the Institute for Appalachian Affairs, all contributed to the university's commitment of regional study and the collection of regional materials.⁵⁰ Richard Blaustein served as the first director for the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services. With a Center of Excellence, the university would be able to expand its programs and research on Appalachia. Ronald Beller, president of East Tennessee State University at the time, said, "I think one of the interesting things and important aspects of the way ETSU has approached this whole field of interest is that

⁴⁸ Marty Edwards, "History of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services." *Now & Then: The Appalachian Magazine*, 11, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 3.

⁴⁹ Appalachian Consortium. "ETSU Energy Series." *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (April 1978) Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 5. University Archives, ETSU: 3.

⁵⁰ Edwards, 4; East Tennessee State University, "Center of Excellence in Appalachian Studies and Services," 1984. Ronald E. Beller Papers, series 2, box 205, folder 13, University Archives, ETSU.

rather than treating the Appalachian area as a laboratory to sort of view from outside, we have gotten more closely interwoven with the area itself.”⁵¹

The University of Kentucky’s Appalachian Center, as well as its Appalachian studies program, began in 1977 in order to promote “cross-disciplinary collaboration, innovative course development and new levels of engagement with the region.”⁵² Dean of Undergraduate Studies John Stephenson established the center through Rockefeller Foundation grants, and the Appalachian studies program through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant.⁵³ Stephenson went on to serve as director of the center from 1979-1984. One of the Appalachian Center’s main concerns was the welfare of people living in eastern Kentucky. The center researched land ownership, economic health, taxation, housing, and healthcare in the region. Eller served as director of the Appalachian Center after Stephenson and noted that the center had an activist orientation from the beginning. As director, he continued that focus on social justice, working to link the university’s resources for outreach and research to the local community’s needs.⁵⁴

In 1975, Mars Hill College proposed the formation of a Southern Appalachian Center. Many of members the faculty at Mars Hill were concerned with getting students involved in the community and addressing community concerns such as healthcare and poverty. The college expressed its intent to focus on Southern Appalachia, not the coal region of Central Appalachia that often dominated the political and economic discourse about the larger region. Rather, the college wanted to focus on rural traditions, small farms, and keeping young, educated people

⁵¹ East Tennessee State University, “University Forum Broadcast, May 13, 1984, transcript.” September 12, 1984. Miscellaneous University Records, box 1, folder 11, University Archives, ETSU: 6.

⁵² University of Kentucky College of Arts and Sciences. “Appalachian Studies, 1977-2011.” Lexington, KY: Old Cove Press (2011): 3.

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁴ Eller interview; Berry interview.

from leaving the region.⁵⁵ The school received Office of Economic Opportunity grants to aid with student community outreach.⁵⁶ The center created task groups to focus on preservation of Southern Appalachian culture, studies and festivals, and community development.⁵⁷ The college hosted the Appalachian Consortium's second Appalachian Issues Forum on February 13, 1980 with the topic "Appalachian Women and Family."⁵⁸

Several schools began to focus on the urban areas of Appalachia. Towns and development centers were often overlooked in Appalachian studies as politicians, scholars, and activists alike tended to focus on rural poverty. The focus on the rural life in Appalachia goes as far back as the nineteenth century, when the Southern Mountains were described as an escape from industrialization or a foreign wilderness. Cities such as Knoxville or Asheville were in the region, but not part of it in the minds of many. The Southern Highlands Research Center began at the University of North Carolina at Asheville in 1977. Its early collections focused on the urban and industrial heritage of the region in the hopes of countering the idea of Appalachia as a specifically rural space. The center also sponsored an oral history program of both urban and rural people of western North Carolina.⁵⁹ Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia, offered a graduate program in urban and regional planning. Its research focus was on regional problems and development for Appalachia.⁶⁰

With the establishment of institutions for dialogue and collaboration, among them the Appalachian Studies Conference and the Appalachian Consortium, and with the creation of

⁵⁵ Mars Hill College. "Proposal for Southern Appalachian Center" (1975), Mars Hill, NC, Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 7, folder 12, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 2.

⁵⁶ Eller interview.

⁵⁷ Mars Hill College, "Proposal for Southern Appalachian Center," 3.

⁵⁸ Mars Hill College to Appalachian Consortium. "Forum on Appalachian Women and Family" (February 1, 1980) Mars Hill, NC. Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 5, University Archives, ETSU.

⁵⁹ Appalachian Consortium. "Southern Highlands Research Center." *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (April 1978) Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 5, University Archives, ETSU: 5.

⁶⁰ Appalachian Studies Association. "Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning." *Appalink*, 4, no. 1 (May 1980) Marshall Digital Scholar, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia: 4.

centers and journals at several universities and colleges, Appalachian studies had become its own field of study. Scholars and activists of the region had created a space for regional research. Designed to incorporate multiple disciplines, viewpoints, and agendas, there were inevitably tensions in creating a space within which academics, activists, and community members could all feel comfortable. Activists were frustrated by academicians for not being more involved in community issues, and academics were frustrated by activists for being too demanding and divisive. Still, several institutions emerged, giving the growing field secure roots.

CHAPTER 5

STUDYING APPALACHIA

While several universities and colleges offered classes on Appalachian history, literature, or culture, proponents of Appalachian studies encouraged schools to develop Appalachian studies curricula. Appalachian studies programs brought classes from various disciplines to create a multidisciplinary course of study. Universities and colleges developed programs for university students, high school students, and members of the community. The study of the region also led to more comparative study and research into how national and global influences affected the region. Appalachian studies programs assembled resources from the various disciplines studying the region in efforts to form an interdisciplinary understanding of the region's history, ecology, economics, and demographics. Furthermore, the activists in Appalachian studies programs hoped to take that multi-faceted understanding and make it applicable to work in the region.

In the introduction to the "Guide to Appalachian Studies" issue of the *Appalachian Journal*, Stephen Fisher addressed the growing interests that gave rise to Appalachian studies in higher education. Environmental activists who were worried about the effects of strip mining, along with supporters of the "back-to-the-earth" movement, supported Appalachian studies because it addressed land ownership, land use, and community organization.¹ Another cause of growth in Appalachian studies came from the availability of government and foundation grants. Grants from organizations, especially the National Endowment for the Humanities, made it possible for colleges to fund special forums or even begin full programs of Appalachian study. Administratively, colleges found Appalachian studies to be what Fisher calls "safe."² Programs

¹ Stephen Fisher, "Introduction to a Guide for Appalachian Studies." *Appalachian Journal* 5, no. 1 (1977), 5.

² Ibid.

addressing noncontroversial topics such as literature, folk craft, and music were easier to defend than the ones criticizing economic structures and calling for political action. This perception of being “safe” helped programs that focused on traditional folklore, literature, and ballads gain administrative support. As early as 1900, schools in Appalachia, such as Berea College, had used the appeal of crafts and music to gain the support and patronage of elites who were happy to sponsor traditional arts. Batteau says, “Folk culture exists for consumption by the elites.”³ Schools or programs that focused on studying folk and the selling of folk culture through crafts or festivals, therefore, pleased elite patrons and maintained the status quo.

Conversely, programs that focused more on political science, economics, and the power structure within Appalachia had a more difficult time gaining support, as they challenged the elites and the status quo. There were local advocates who were aware of the social, political, and economic forces and the cultural heritage of the region. Activists wanted to see higher education develop more programs for awareness and study of Appalachia.⁴ Scholars in other parts of the country were advocating for regional studies as well during the 1970s. For example, study of the South had a long history, however, Southern studies developed into an interdisciplinary field in the 1970s. The first center for Southern studies began in 1977 when the Center for the Study of Southern Culture opened at the University of Mississippi.⁵ The rise of movements that gave a voice to marginalized groups encouraged regional scholars to develop programs that gave a voice to marginalized areas as well.

Those advocating for more Appalachian studies programs on campuses addressed the role of regional identity within universities and colleges. Most schools identified as general

³ Batteau, 80.

⁴ Fisher, “Introduction to a Guide for Appalachian Studies,” 5

⁵ Center for the Study of Southern Culture. “History,” accessed March 22, 2015.
<http://southernstudies.olemiss.edu/about/history/>

institutions for higher education. They did not consider themselves regional universities. As Cratis Williams noted, “For generations, educators understood their missions to be that of standardizing young people simply as Americans. Regional cultures were not only ignored, but those who retained evidences of regional or ethnic subcultures were melted down and made over into what somebody somewhere had determined [citizens] should be.”⁶ Regional affiliation or identity were simply not a concern for the wider campus community. Administratively, there was some resistance to forming entire programs around Appalachian studies. Professors teaching Appalachian studies courses would be less available to their own departments. Appalachian studies also heavily relied on grant money in order to host events and forums. Like any new development at a college, it costs money and space to accommodate something new. Another concern was that Appalachian studies was a “faddish” topic linked closely with the folk movement of the time and that it would be unable to support itself long-term.⁷ While Fisher said that some administrations supported Appalachian studies because it was “safe,” other administrations worried that Appalachian studies was quite the opposite. Instead of focusing on the topics of literature and culture, administrators were concerned that Appalachian studies’ involvement in community organization, participation in the Land Ownership Study, and criticism of strip mining would alienate contributors to the college.⁸ As Richard B. Drake noted, there was some resistance on campuses. The first adversaries to Appalachian studies were established disciplines and departments who, he said, were “suspicious, even contemptuous, of our ‘unenlightened and unschooled’ culture and were sure that they had the curriculum and

⁶ Cratis Williams, “On Being Appalachian: Meaning and Values in Regional Studies” (1984), Cratis D. Williams Papers, box 56, folder 17, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 2.

⁷ Fisher, “Introduction to a Guide for Appalachian Studies,” 6.

⁸ Ibid.

knowledge necessary for our uplift.”⁹ Other schools, however, did have administrative support. For example, Appalachian studies at East Tennessee State University received administrative support from presidents Arthur DeRosier and Ronald Beller. The Appalachian studies program there initially developed through the English department, such as Robert Jack Higgs’ “Appalachian Literature” course and Manning and Burton’s folklore courses. Richard Blaustein began teaching at the university in 1970, specializing in folklore, bluegrass, and old time music. A native of Brooklyn, New York, Blaustein first became interested in Appalachia and folk music when he saw folk singer Pete Seeger perform.¹⁰ A fiddler himself, Blaustein organized bands and hosted the Old Time Radio Reunion in Jonesborough, Tennessee. The Old Time Radio Reunion imitated the style of early live radio broadcasts in upper east Tennessee, which featured the Carter Family, Tennessee Ernie Ford, and Chet Atkins. Fifty to sixty musicians participated over three days, performing barn dance shows or reminiscing about the early days of radio.¹¹ Blaustein also organized the first Homefolks Festival at East Tennessee State University in 1979. The festival featured traditional music and dancing performances. East Tennessee State University supported the study of traditional music and began its bluegrass, old time, and country music program in 1982. Herrin said, “We’ve had some pretty solid support over the years for Appalachian studies. The creation of the center was a brilliant stroke of genius on part of the university, because it allowed for Appalachian studies to take a larger role and have a much higher profile than it would have otherwise.”¹²

⁹ Drake, 191.

¹⁰ Elaine Cloud Goller, “Keeping a heritage alive,” *Johnson City Press-Chronicle*, February 7, 1981, series 2, box 1, folder 11, Richard Blaustein Collection 1945-1981, Archives of Appalachia, ETSU: 3.

¹¹ Pat Bible, “Pickin’, Grinnin’ in Jonesboro,” *Kingsport Times-News*, April 29, 1979, series 2, box 1, folder 2, Richard Blaustein Collection 1945-1981, Archives of Appalachia, ETSU.

¹² Herrin interview.

Supporters of Appalachian studies noted that community involvement, often a crucial part to regional study, could increase enrollment and better prepare students to stay in the community upon graduation, instead of fleeing the region. By identifying as regional universities, schools would commit themselves to promoting discussion and study of regional identity and regional topics. In 1976, Joseph T. Hart of Ferrum College addressed the collegiate landscape and the idea that colleges in Appalachia should serve as regional resources. One factor affecting the role of colleges nationally was a shift in the priorities and goals of higher education. Colleges focused on training students for a specific career within a discipline instead of providing a well-rounded education.¹³ This shift emphasized technical skills and business rather than an encompassing liberal arts education. Regionally, Hart claimed, colleges failed to claim Appalachia as a regional label. Hart saw this failure as preventing schools from addressing rural problems, regional heritage, and local economic problems.¹⁴ Colleges focused too much on state or national competition and not enough on reaching the communities in their backyards. On the institutional level, he criticized departmental isolation and university reliance on donor influence.¹⁵ In order for colleges to function as regional schools for a changing collegiate landscape, Hart called for “expanded liberal arts programs and broader community involvement.”¹⁶ Others shared Hart’s conviction that a regional university should have a liberal arts rooting. In “The Role of Appalachia’s Colleges in Appalachia’s Future,” Williams claimed regional study grounds students in a liberal arts education geared for understanding of and making an impact in their communities. An understanding of local culture helps the university aid the local community. It also helps locals succeed in education and become better informed,

¹³ Joseph T. Hart, “The Future Role of the Independent College in Appalachia” (1976), Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 4, folder 2, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

more active members of the community.¹⁷ Williams also proposed that regional colleges utilize their facilities toward community interest and need. He noted that in some areas, the university owns the most valuable real estate in the county, but that the land and buildings go unused during certain times of the year. A regional college should share its resources with the community.¹⁸

Eller said that during the 1970s, there was a strong social consciousness to participate in seeking solutions to community problems. Students, in particular, felt a duty to be engaged with the community. He said, “Within higher education there was the sense that students owed something back to the communities and had a certain responsibility to the communities.”¹⁹ Schools offered students opportunities for internships and volunteer programs in their local communities. For example, Mars Hill College received an Office of Economic Opportunity grant for a student outreach program. Part of a well-rounded education was applying it to movements beyond campus.²⁰ Hart said, “The point is that liberal arts to be true liberal learning must serve toward freeing people to a greater fulfillment of life...the liberal arts college that seeks to do all things for all people probably cannot survive, but the liberal arts college must do meaningful things for an increasing number of people within its community in order to survive—and to serve.”²¹

Establishing Appalachian Studies Programs

In 1970, Williams developed a model curriculum for Appalachian studies that explored Appalachia as a subculture through the fields of history, psychology, sociology, and religion.²²

An example of an interdisciplinary Appalachian studies program can be seen in Appalachian

¹⁷ Cratis Williams, “The Role of Appalachia’s Colleges in Appalachia’s Future” (1976), Cratis D. Williams Papers, box 56, folder 17, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Eller interview.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Hart, “The Future Role of the Independent College in Appalachia” 13.

²² Herbert W. Wey. “Cratis Williams and App Studies at ASU” (Apr 7, 1976) Pat Beaver Papers, box 15, folder 2, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU: 3.

State University's listing of Appalachian studies courses for Spring 1978: "Appalachian Ethnography," "Literature of Appalachian Women," "Community and Regional Planning in Appalachia," "History of the Appalachian Region," "History of the South," "Teaching of State and Local History," "Appalachian Politics," "Appalachian Political Perspectives," and "Appalachian Religion."²³

One of the earliest interdisciplinary Appalachian studies programs was established at Union College in Barbourville, Kentucky, in 1971. The upper-level undergraduate students could participate in the college's "Appalachian Semester," in which all classes for the semester were geared toward the study of Appalachia, including community volunteering. The Fall 1971 "Appalachian Semester" offered the classes "Economics and Appalachian Poverty," "The Southern Appalachian Region," "Appalachian Dialects," and a social work course focused on the local community.²⁴ Around this time, several schools in West Virginia adopted a regional focus that studied the coal industry's impact on the region's environment, labor practices, and social structure. Colleges such as Davis and Elkins College, Wheeling College, Morris Harvey College, and Antioch Appalachia offered programs designed around Appalachian studies in which students could design their own major. West Virginia Tech's labor studies program had an Appalachian emphasis. West Virginia University offered an interdepartmental major in Appalachian studies.²⁵

In 1978, the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to offer thirteen courses over three academic years. At the time, the university only offered one class, "Introduction to the Southern Appalachians," which was at the

²³ Center for Appalachian Studies. "Appalachian Studies Courses, Spring 1978." (1978) Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 13, folder 6, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

²⁴ Union College, "The Appalachian Semester" (1971), Historical Records, 1971-1982, box 6, folder 17, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

²⁵ Fisher, "Introduction to a Guide for Appalachian Studies," 7.

graduate level. The first year of undergraduate courses included a class on the politics in Appalachia and folklore in Appalachia. Harry Caudill also taught two history courses. Courses added over the next two years discussed history of the region's women, Appalachian culture, geography, literature, music, film, language, and family and child development.²⁶ That same year, Radford University began its Highland Summer Conference, focusing on literature and art. Radford University was also the first school in Virginia to offer a minor in Appalachian studies. Its Appalachian studies program began in 1981 and emphasized student field work in folklore, anthropology, health care, education, and the arts.²⁷

At Appalachian State University, the school offered a minor in Appalachian studies for a number of years before the establishment of the Center for Appalachian Studies. However, Patricia Beaver noted that the minor was formed out of "a patchwork of courses" already available, rather than designed to build off of one other.²⁸ The master's program designed in 1978 would be more intentional in its design, making sure classes complemented and built upon each other. It would include core classes in anthropology, history, and religion of Appalachia, as well as the two courses "Appalachia in Social Context" and "Bibliography in Appalachian Studies." A bibliography in Appalachian studies aimed to draw the research of various disciplines together to form a basis for studying Appalachia. A 1976 suggested-reading list for Appalachian studies at Appalachian State University includes studies of geography, sociology, and political science. It also included government and academic reports on Watauga County,

²⁶ University of Kentucky College of Arts and Sciences. "Appalachian Studies, 1977-2011." Lexington, KY: Old Cove Press (2011): 6.

²⁷ Grace Toney Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, 2006 ed., s.v. "Appalachian Regional Studies Center." Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006.; Appalachian Studies Association, "Appalachian Studies at Radford University." *Appalink* 5, no. 1 (September 1981): 3. Accessed February 25, 2015. Marshall Digital Scholar, Marshall University, Huntington, WV. http://mds.marshall.edu/asa_newsletter/11/.

²⁸ Beaver interview.

North Carolina.²⁹ A bibliography in Appalachian studies also included regional literature and folktales. In creating a bibliography on Appalachian folktales, Judy Cornett noted that many of the early works were so riddled with dialect that they were almost impossible to read. She found collections from the 1930s, particularly work done by the Federal Writers Project, better suited for inclusion.³⁰ Graduate electives were offered in anthropology, economics, English, geography, history, political science, secondary education, and sociology.³¹ The Center for Appalachian Studies oversaw the graduate program, although the Appalachian studies courses were listed under the history department.³² The master's program began in the fall of 1979 with three full-time and six part-time students.³³

In 1980, East Tennessee State University received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for an introductory Appalachian studies course that would draw from English, education, geography, history, and sociology. A description of the course in the *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* said, "The course will highlight different models of investigation and the perspectives of different disciplines. It also will identify some of the more significant and specific questions...such as the history of ideas about the Appalachian region and the status of Appalachia in the United States economic system."³⁴ Linda Scott, director of the Institute for Appalachian Affairs, hoped the establishment of such a course would lead to a minor in

²⁹ Center for Appalachian Studies, "Appalachian Studies Bibliographies, 1974-1976," (1976) Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 6, folder 5, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

³⁰ Judy Cornett, "Bibliography and Assorted Notes," (undated) Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 4, folder 2, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

³¹ Patricia Beaver to Arthur DeRosier, letter, February 13, 1979. Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 2, University Archives, ETSU, TN: 4.

³² *Ibid.*, 5.

³³ Appalachian Consortium. "Students Pursue M.A. in Appalachian Studies at ASU," *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 3, no. 4 (January 1980). Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 5. University Archives, ETSU: 6.

³⁴ Appalachian Consortium. "ETSU Receives NEH Grant for Appalachian Studies Course," *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 3, no. 6 (May 1980). Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 5, University Archives, ETSU: 2.

Appalachian studies being offered at East Tennessee State University. That same year, the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University received grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Tennessee Committee for the Humanities to develop an outreach archival program. The program would consist of a mobile presentation of slides and videos on East Tennessee based on the archives' collections so that archivists could show the presentations to schools and community groups that could not regularly visit the archives.³⁵ Laurel Horton, the Outreach Program Coordinator at the Archives of Appalachia, selected the topics of the presentations. The first set of presentations covered such topics as Johnson City history, Tri-Cities music, and Appalachian farming.³⁶

Appalachian studies programs relied heavily on cooperating departments offering the related courses and, therefore, programs aimed to be as interdisciplinary as possible and include a number of departments. At East Tennessee State University, participating departments included sociology, history, English, music, social work, political science, geography, and biology. Appalachian studies served to add a regional focus on a myriad of interests. The Institute for Appalachian Affairs also hosted a series of workshops for the community in the summer of 1979. Topics included social welfare, nutrition, folk literature, and Appalachian heritage for childhood educators.³⁷ These workshops were part of on-going collaborations between the institute and the departments of sociology and education to address social work, nutrition, and education in the region.

³⁵ Archives of Appalachia, "The Archives to Begin Outreach Program," *The Archives of Appalachia Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (December 1979). Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 8, folder 13, University Archives, ETSU:1.

³⁶ Archives of Appalachia, "Laurel Horton Appointed to Outreach Program," *The Archives of Appalachia Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (March 1980). Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 8, folder 13, University Archives, ETSU: 2.

³⁷ Linda Scott to Abbott Brayton, "Annual Goals and Accomplishments," (May 6, 1980) Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 1, University Archives, ETSU.

Just as there was an effort to bring community activism into Appalachian studies, there was an effort to bring Appalachian studies to the community. A community better informed about its history and the region would be better prepared to take action and make decisions to benefit the community. At Warren Wilson College in 1976, a series of classes and lectures was offered to students and to the general public throughout the fall semester. Lecture topics included “Politics and Social Issues in Appalachia” by Stephen Fisher, “Religion and Values in Appalachian Lives” by Loyal Jones, “The Appalachian Experience” by Cratis Williams, and “Cherokee Craft and Folklore” by Mary Ulmer Chiltoskey. The college also hosted panels with local labor leaders, ballad singers, storytellers, and folklorists.³⁸ In June 1979, thirty-two public school teachers participated in a series of workshops at Warren Wilson College. The workshops discussed traditional crafts, folktales, the Cherokee, Scots-Irish settlement, and the experience of blacks, Jews, and Chinese in the area. Teachers were then encouraged to create teaching units that included the role subcultures played in western North Carolina for grades 4-8. The Office of Education’s Ethnic Heritage Studies Program granted funds for the program.³⁹ In an interview for the *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter*, organizer Joan Moser said, “Really, what we’re talking about is the American experience in this region. We hope that teachers will encourage their students to go into their communities and to seek information on the ethnic groups who live there.”⁴⁰

Similarly, Mars Hill College offered an “alternative vacation” in July 1980, open to students and non-students. Seminars included “What to Know about the Region” by Ronald Eller; “What to Read about the Region,” by Edwin Cheek; and “What to See in the Region,” by

³⁸ Warren Wilson College, “Introduction to Appalachian Studies Programs,” Historical Records, 1971-1982, box 6, folder 17, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

³⁹ Appalachian Consortium. “Teacher Workshops at Warren Wilson College.” *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 2, no. 2 (May 1979). Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 6, University Archives, ETSU: 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Richard Dillingham. There was also a biology presentation on the natural history of the Blue Ridge and a sociology presentation on community life. Attendants of the program also attended ballad concerts and the Rural Life Museum.⁴¹ With a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the Appalachian Learning Laboratory at Alice Lloyd College developed a curriculum for high school students that would coordinate studies of craft, food preservation, history, literature, journalism, and customs and beliefs.⁴² Also with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Berea College hosted a series of programs on traditional folk life in Appalachia. The program entitled “Appalachia: Yesterday and Today” discussed whether traditional culture had evolved or been replaced by national modernity. Other programs covered such topics as food preservation methods, gardening, mountain medicine, and the history of the timber industry.⁴³

Comparing Appalachia to Other Regions

Rather than focusing on the traits or preservation of a particular culture, regional studies is most useful when the region is understood through a broader, interactive context. As Jim Stokely, who directed the program “An Appalachian Experience” at the Children’s Museum of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, said, “Appalachian courses aren’t justified when they wrap students in a security quilt pieced together from patches of Mother Jones, Sequoyah, Trail of the Lonesome Pine, and the Carter Family. The study of Appalachia per se is justified when it acts as a springboard, flipping an inquisitive mind from a sound base of heritage and analysis into an even

⁴¹ Appalachian Consortium. “Vacation-Learning Experience Offered at Mars Hills College,” *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 3, no. 6 (May 1980) Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 5, University Archives, ETSU: 5.

⁴² Appalachian Studies Association. “Alice Lloyd College—Pippa Passes, KY.” *Appalink* 3, no. 2 (September 1979): 4, accessed February 25, 2015. Marshall Digital Scholar, Marshall University, Huntington, WV. http://mds.marshall.edu/asa_newsletter/5/.

⁴³ Berea College “Traditional Folklife Project at Berea.” Center for Appalachian Studies Records, box 6, folder 3, W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, ASU.

richer realm of worldwide wonder and curiosity.”⁴⁴ One approach to understanding a region is comparative study with other regions and cultures and learning how regions interact through trade, migration, and national affiliation. The internal colonialism model that was popular among activists in the early 1970s led some to study countries and cultures that had been shaped by colonialization. Central and South America in particular served as places for proponents of the internal colonialism model to study migration and economic parallels.⁴⁵

The University of Kentucky and Berea College established a faculty exchange program with the University of Rome in the early 1980s. Harlan County, Kentucky, was included in books on Italian history as a comparison of rural life. Alessandro Portelli, a professor of American literature at the University of Rome, said, “In a comparative perspective, the internal colonialism model as a way of understanding Appalachia is relevant in Italy as well.”⁴⁶

In 1979, Helen Lewis, with John Gaventa and Patricia Beaver, arranged for a group of Welsh coal miners to tour the coalfields of Appalachia. Lewis had been studying coal mining culture in southwest Virginia and had gone to Wales for a year to conduct film and documentation work. She researched the idea of an international culture of mining and wanted to compare mining communities in Wales and Appalachia.⁴⁷ Seven coal miners and a labor historian arrived in May 1979 and travelled through Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and eastern Kentucky. They compared the safety, health prevention, and healthcare of miners in the United States and the United Kingdom.⁴⁸ Just as activists such as Lewis saw Appalachia as an internal colony of America, they saw Wales as an internal colony of Britain. Outsider corporations

⁴⁴ Stephen Fisher, “Introduction to a Guide for Appalachian Studies,” 6.

⁴⁵ Beaver interview.

⁴⁶ University of Kentucky College of Arts and Sciences, 12.

⁴⁷ Beaver interview.

⁴⁸ Appalachian Consortium. “Welsh Coal Miners Tour Appalachian Coalfields,” *Appalachian Consortium Newsletter* 3, no. 1 (July 1979) Arthur DeRosier Papers, series 1, box 9, folder 6, University Archives, ETSU: 3.

owned the land and industry in coal communities in both Central Appalachia and Wales. Lewis also noted that both places had similar highland environments, a history of rural farming taken over by extractive industry, and a viable subculture.⁴⁹ The connections made with miners and labor organizations during the tour later helped in developing into a study abroad program for Appalachian State University students to study mining communities and community organizing in Wales.⁵⁰

East Tennessee State University developed a relationship with Scotland through scholars interested in the migration of Scots to Southern Appalachia. Because the Archives of Appalachia had one of the best collections of Appalachian music recordings and photographs, it attracted requests from scholars as far away as Scotland and Australia.⁵¹ There was international correspondence for many years, and finally in 1988, Thomas Burton established the Appalachian-Scottish Studies program to study the influence of Scottish migration to Appalachia, particularly in music and storytelling, but also in areas of language, foodways, and religion. Through connections on both sides of the Atlantic, East Tennessee State University and the University of Edinburgh established an exchange program. On alternating years, students would visit to study the history, culture, and influences of a region.⁵² Roberta Herrin observed that through the exchange program students learned about the transformation of culture, such as how Scottish culture had changed through migration and influence of other cultures.⁵³ At the same time, the program could serve as a contemporary regional comparative study. She said, “Regional studies can allow you to see commonalities among geographies and peoples who appear to be very different on the surface, but when you dig down and you look at regional

⁴⁹ Lewis, *Living Social Justice in Appalachia*, 83, 85.

⁵⁰ Beaver interview.

⁵¹ East Tennessee State University, “University Forum Broadcast,” 3.

⁵² Burton interview.

⁵³ Herrin interview.

issues, then you see that there are the same issues of disparity and environment...across regions.”⁵⁴

In 1983, Patricia Beaver took a leave from Appalachian State University to conduct research in China. The experience, she said, changed her perspective on Appalachia. She began studying the urban areas of the region, which led to her learning more about the black, Asian, and Jewish communities of Asheville. By looking at the commerce and development of urban Appalachian communities, Beaver found more and more regional-global ties. She said, “The idea hit that we have been connected globally, always, and we need to look at globalization as a very significant force in the region.”⁵⁵ This portrait of Appalachia, as a region of urban centers and global connections, contradicts the old image of Appalachia as an isolated wilderness. As Wilma Dunaway states, even in the nineteenth century, “Appalachian towns, villages, and counties were not simply agrarian hinterlands. Indeed, they countryside was a mosaic of agriculture, industry, commerce, and town life.”⁵⁶ Global connections through trade and migration have always existed in Appalachia, but the idea of Appalachia as an isolated region stalled the recognition and study of those connections.

Through the development of academic programs, Appalachian studies gained a stronger presence in universities and colleges across the region. Students, as well as community members in general, were able to learn about Appalachia by combining disciplinary knowledge into an integrated program. Batteau said of the early days of local color writing, “Facts from several semantic domains were abstracted, rearranged, and shown in their new arrangement to have a meaningful relationship to each other and to other domains, and so established as a domain in

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Beaver interview.

⁵⁶ Dunaway, 249.

their own right.”⁵⁷ Academic programs for Appalachian studies also took knowledge from various academic domains and arranged them into a meaningful relationship. While there was no consensus on a single definition or narrative, scholars still desired to research and understand Appalachia. Questions of heritage, identity, and power drew in several disciplines. Appalachian studies programs spread out beyond campuses through community lectures and student outreach work. Efforts for a liberal arts, interdisciplinary study of Appalachia provided individuals the tools to understand their communities in a regional and global context.

⁵⁷ Batteau, 56.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Appalachian studies emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a space to counter the prevailing narrative of the region. It offered counter-narrative to the idea that Appalachia was an isolated place dominated by a culture of poverty. By its very existence, Appalachian studies asserted that Appalachia was indeed a region unto itself and that there were unique qualities and characteristics to that region. However, the matter of defining the region was left to individuals in their particular disciplines with their particular experiences. While the Appalachian Regional Commission provided a wide, general boundary, Appalachia continued to be defined through a variety of contexts, be it folklore, coal mining, or the mountains from which it gets its name. Stephen D. Mooney notes, “Depending upon one’s perspective, the region can serve as anything from frontier wilderness treasured by tourists and nature lovers to a scarred symbol of industrial exploitation and a place to be avoided.”¹ A region continues to be part of a larger whole, and as such, the definition of a region continues to evolve to serve the needs of the nation, whether as mirrored microcosm or antithetical warning. Scholars of region must question regional definitions. Where is this region? What is an accurate, inclusive representation of this region? Who is defining it?

As a field, Appalachian studies grew in membership and in recognition in higher education. From the Cratis Williams Symposium held in 1976, there emerged a group of academics and activists who saw a need to engage the region through interdisciplinary study. They wanted to move away from the traditional stereotypes of Appalachia: static, isolated culture of rural, white poverty. Scholarship on the region began to open up to more disciplines and more

¹ Stephen D. Mooney, *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, 2006 ed., s.v. “Sense of Place.” Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006.

representation in the regional discourse. Chad Berry noted that Appalachia is complex and “a region of great diversity, urban and rural, gay and straight, black, Native American, with economic prosperity and economic challenge, sometimes in the same place.”² During the early years of Appalachian studies, academics and activists took steps toward including, even if not fully incorporating, various voices in the region, for as Douglas Reichert Powell noted, “the image of Appalachia also shifts and slips and turns up in unexpected places.”³ How one defined the region would depend on one’s own experiences, values, and politics. The region existed, Appalachian studies insisted, but not in the clear-cut way an Appalachian Regional Commission map portrayed it.

Activists sought connections to and engagement with communities. Concerns over health care, education, land ownership, and the environment spurred activism in the region.

Organizations such as the Highlander Research and Education Center and the Appalachian Alliance worked to mobilize the community to find its own solutions and petition to have its voice heard. In cases such as the Appalachian Regional Commission’s Land Ownership Study, community members participated in the research.⁴ Scholars worked with communities by bringing students out of the classroom and into the community to engage in participatory research, gather oral histories, or investigate the political and social problems around them.

Appalachian studies gained a stronger foothold in academia. Organizations such as the Appalachian Studies Conference and the Appalachian Consortium brought scholars together to collaborate and share research. Universities and colleges, such as Appalachian State University, Berea College, East Tennessee State University, Mars Hill College, Radford University, and the

² Berry interview.

³ Douglas Reichert Powell. “Looking Forward, Talking Back: The Politics of Appalachian Cultural Studies.” *Appalachian Journal* 27, 2 (Winter 2000): 156.

⁴ Beaver interview.

University of Kentucky established centers for Appalachian research and programs. Students were able to participate in programs designed to study the region in an interdisciplinary setting. The success of centers for Appalachian studies and the growth Appalachian studies programs has continued. More schools are involved with regional study of Appalachia, including community colleges. However, the concerns that Appalachian studies would become institutionalized appear to be true. The Appalachian Studies Conference did become an association. Although early plans called for the conference to alternate years between academic and activist hosts, for the past decade, it has been hosted only at schools of higher education.

Both the academic and activist approaches to Appalachia understood the region as a place that had suffered from earlier, simplistic and condescending stereotypes. Both were committed to dispelling such stereotypes. The disagreements arose when the two forces had to decide what course of action would best serve Appalachian studies. Would too much community engagement make research too biased? Would too little community engagement make universities too detached? Should students be involved in political action efforts? How much representation should academics, activists, and community members have within the realm of Appalachian studies? Such questions dominated the early years of the field as representatives from all sides struggled to figure out what exactly this new field should become. The formation of centers on the campuses of universities and colleges cemented Appalachian studies as an academic field, yet its beginnings as a reaction to struggle and injustice would continue in the discourse and the topics of study. Looking forward, the field will have to address its evolution and once again evaluate the role of Appalachian studies. Is regional studies sustainable? If the social problems are resolved and the stereotypes dispelled, what work is left? Can a field that developed from struggle continue if the resistance is gone? Many scholars think that the struggle will never be

over, as new problems and new questions will always be present in the region. As the region changes, so will its challenges. And some of the challenges addressed in the early years of Appalachian studies continue to need attention, such as energy sources, environmental protection, accessible healthcare, and economic sustainability.⁵

While there were early attempts of including various voices in the study of the region, women, racial minorities, urban centers, and non-Protestant religious traditions were often ignored or regulated to special, separate discussions. Going forward, there have been continued efforts to include minority voices. In 2015, the Appalachian Studies Association created a standing Diversity and Inclusion Committee to insure the representation of minority voices, including those of activists.⁶ Jerry Williamson said of getting involved in Appalachian studies, “It was like throwing off these graduate school blinders that we all get in the process of going through our programs of study. This disciplinary myopia, where we can only see this little portion of anything...To suddenly be thrown in with anthropologists and political scientists and sociologists and historians and learn that there is a whole bunch of different ways of looking at reality. In fact, that there is a whole of other *reality* to look at. It changed my life.”⁷

Appalachian studies continues to be a field struggling for space and recognition among older, more established disciplines. It is important to understand the roots of Appalachian studies as an effort to combine academic and activist resources to study and improve Appalachia, despite disagreements within the field and resistance outside the field. Note that almost as quickly as Appalachian studies formed, scholars in the field were concerned that it would end. Despite the establishment of associations, university centers, and academic programs, academics feared that

⁵ Herrin interview, Fisher interview.

⁶ Appalachian Studies Association. “Diversity and Inclusion Committee Report,” *Appalink* 38, 2 (Spring 2015): 4. <http://appalachianstudies.org/appalink/archives/38.2.pdf>.

⁷ Williamson interview with Beaver and Lewis, 19.

support for Appalachian studies would fade, a “fad” of 1970s higher education when the goals of social justice efforts aligned with the back to earth folk movement. The fear of a fading Appalachian studies field continued into the 1980s as several programs faced financial cutbacks. In 1981, John Stephenson shared his concerns about the “coming depression in higher education.”⁸ Funding cuts and hiring freezes would mean less research, less peer correspondence, and fewer books. He said, “The effects of budget cutbacks on new, interdisciplinary college programs vary in intensity, but generally they appear to be severe. Regional studies and research programs are...vulnerable because of our scattered constituencies, our nondepartmental [sic] status, our relative newness.”⁹

The newly-elected President Reagan sought massive cut backs to federal programs. War on Poverty programs were put under investigation for corruption and waste.¹⁰ The Appalachian Regional Commission, which had just published the results of the Land Ownership Study, faced massive cuts and possible elimination.¹¹ Reagan’s budget cuts affected higher education as well. Reagan’s proposal for the 1982 budget cut funds to education by 20%.¹² The National Endowment for the Humanities, which funded so many of the Appalachian studies programs, faced up to a 50% cut. Higher education also faced the elimination of residential fellowships and summer seminars.¹³ While the budget cuts that officially passed were not as severe as expected,

⁸ Appalachian Studies Association. “A Recession in Appalachian Studies?” *Appalink* 4, no. 3 (February 1978): 1. Accessed February 25, 2015. Marshall Digital Scholar, Marshall University, Huntington, WV. http://mds.marshall.edu/asa_newsletter/9/.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Annelise Orleck. “Conclusion: The War on The War on Poverty and American Politics since the 1960s” In *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011): 438, 439. Accessed on March 14, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46np4b.20>.

¹¹ Estall, 56.

¹² John Walsh, “Budget Tailors Education to Reagan Pattern.” *Science* 215, no. 4536 (February 26, 1982) 1077. Accessed March 16, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1688368>.

¹³ Special to the *New York Times*. “Humanities Agency Lists Programs to be Cut Back.” *New York Times*, March 11, 1981, www.nytimes.com/1981/03/11/arts/humanities-agency-lists-programs-to-be-cut-back.html (Accessed March 16, 2015.)

the 1982 budget still included large financial cuts for higher education. A number of programs and fellowships for women and minority students were eliminated. Pell Grants and student loans also suffered cutbacks.¹⁴

Yet Appalachian studies continued to grow as a field of research and community engagement. As John Stephenson said, “Surely we in the ‘Appalachian Studies Industry,’ as John Gaventa labeled us in the first meeting of the A.S.C., can learn what so many Appalachians have over the decades: how to be poorer without dying off.”¹⁵ Scholars in the field might raise questions about definitions, level of political action, and funding, but Appalachian studies allows such questions to be raised. The need for space to raise contextual questions is the same now as it was forty years ago. As Chad Berry said, “We need to continue to try to be as inclusive as possible. We need to engage new questions. We need to continue to keep activism strong, continue to need to counteract the prevailing and predominant ways that [sic] people think about the region. We need to continue to educate people outside the region, as well as those inside the region, about the region’s challenges but, also importantly, about its assets.”¹⁶ Regional studies allows scholars to share resources and questions about the desire to preserve way of life, the fight to keep activism alive, and the tools to face new challenges. For both academics and activists in Appalachian studies, the field continues to be a space to research, discuss, and find solutions to regional struggles.

¹⁴ Walsh, 1078.

¹⁵ Appalachian Studies Association, “A Recession in Appalachian Studies?” 1.

¹⁶ Berry interview.

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